IN HIS OWN HAND.

AUTHOR OF

"GOD'S PROVIDENCE HOUSE."

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IN HIS OWN HAND.

BY

MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS,

AUTHORESS OF

"GOD'S PROVIDENCE HOUSE," "THE MANCHESTER MAN," "FORBIDDEN TO MARRY," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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IN HIS OWN HAND.

CHAPTER I.

TWO ROADS TO GAOL.

"Good God! It is Squire West!" exclaimed both men simultaneously, when in less than three minutes they knelt beside the huddled mass, their own reins flung to the rough brown hands of a smock-frocked clown with staring eyes.

William gently raised to his knee the handsome head from which hat and peruke had fallen, and hurriedly bade another fellow bring water from the nearest spring, whilst Roper loosened the falling neckcloth of embroidered lawn, already flecked with blood, and then from a private "pocket-pistol," charged with Hollands that did not smack of the Custom-house, drop by drop poured the potent spirit between teeth loosened and bleeding from the fall.

It gurgled in his throat. The sharply outlined face remained livid and ghastly.

Was William Hutton's memory playing him tricks, or was that the aspect of all dying men, he was so forcibly reminded of old Mr. Webb in his last hours? Yet Squire West was a stalwart man in the very prime of life.

"Are any bones broken, think you?" he questioned, shaking off his vague fancy.

A groan followed Roper's attempt to straighten limbs.

"At all events he's alive," he answered. "Here!" And again the "pocket-pistol" went to the blue lips.

Before a mouthful could be swallowed or the countryman come back with water in his hat to dash in the white face, horsemen from the race-course came riding up pell-mell with a lady in their midst, who with a shriek flung herself from her horse and casting herself on the ground besides the helpless form, cried out in agonizing accents,

"Oh, Philip, Philip! Oh, my darling husband! He is dead, he is dead! That vile woman hath been the death of him!"

There was a slight quiver of the nostrils, a faint flicker of the eyelids—either her voice, or the clasp of her warm hand on his had been more potent than the Hollands.

The closely shaven head still rested against

Mr. Hutton's knee. "No, madam," said he reassuringly. "Thank Heaven, the squire is living, but he is seriously hurt. He needs a surgeon—and must have air. Pray do not crowd him," and he waved back the group of sporting squires and dashing bucks who pressed too closely, some of whom scowled at him as if asking, "Who is this fellow taking so much upon himself?"

A doctor was not far to seek. In less than a couple of minutes Dr. Davison was on the spot. From the summit of the hill at the commencement of the Mansfield Road he had witnessed a singularly gaunt gipsyish woman throw herself almost in the path of Squire West, then leaving the race-course in advance of his excited party. Her object appeared to be fortune-telling. Moodily repulsed, she vociferated loudly something, of which he only caught,

> "An eye for an eye, a life for a life,
> A childless mother, a widowed wife,"

as she flung up her arms with wild gesticulations, and swept her wide brimmed hat in the very eyes of his fiery young hunter.

The horse reared, swerved, plunged forward, and was gone like the wind, leaving the fleetest pursuer far behind.

The doctor had put spurs in the sides of his

own comfortable cob and followed, though not before he had seen rough hands laid on the violent woman who had dived ineffectually among the crowd for concealment.

In less time than it has taken to tell this, the doctor had gently moved the sobbing lady from her injured husband's side, in low tones questioned William Hutton, whom he knew, and made a brief examination.

Madam West, with strained and streaming eyes, clasped her hands together and breathlessly waited the result; and as the doctor's manipulation caused the squire to groan, she swayed to and fro, and wailed, "Oh, Philip, my love, my love. If I lose thee I lose all," wringing her helpless hands in agony.

"There are no limbs broken," said the doctor, after another appeal to Roper's spirit-flask had brought a sign of returning consciousness, "but we must get the squire home, madam, his injuries are internal—and I fear his spine is hurt," he whispered in a lower key to the two men who still supported the prostrate form. But madam caught the words, and again threw herself beside him in unutterable anguish.

There was a hasty consultation. The catastrophe had sobered those who had drunk the deepest during the day. Boughs were hurriedly torn down and their leafy branches

interlaced to form a litter, ferns cropped to supply a bed.

At that juncture a chariot and six came lumbering up. "My carriage and Bestwood house are at the disposal of Madam West and the squire," volunteered the owner.

The offer could only be courteously declined. At the chariot door the doctor whispered as an apology: "I fear the jolting of a vehicle on this shameful road would be fatal." And his glance said more than his words.

"Home," faintly fell from the sufferer's pallid lips. "Home," urged the white and trembling wife, alone amongst a crowd of men.

But home was miles away, and though the litter lay upon the turf it was a delicate and difficult task to lift the heavy and helpless frame of the big man upon it, the slightest motion causing exquisite agony, agony so keenly reacting upon the apprehensive wife.

"He has fainted! Your flask," whispered the doctor to Roper at his elbow, when the feat was at length accomplished.

Madam shrieked aloud; she thought the end had come. But the potent spirit did its duty, her husband's hand trembled within hers, and hope revived.

There was no dearth of bearers. The riderless horse tearing madly through the forest

had brought keepers and others on the scene. Though he was a terror to evil-doers, honest labourers and gentry alike respected the good squire, and were equally ready as relays.

Joseph Roper—on his way home—lent a willing and steady shoulder, some one leading his sorrel mare. William Hutton, sensitive and sympathetic, would have gone on to West Hall, but the sun was setting and he felt bound to return to Nottingham.

For a few hesitating minutes he watched the sad procession move slowly on under the flickering lights and shadows of the woodland, the watchful wife and doctor on either side the litter. Then, wondering at the more than common interest he felt in the fate of this man who was little more than a stranger to him, he rode back home at a rapid pace, for the day was far spent, and he feared to make his little wife uneasy by longer delay.

As it was she met him on the threshold eagerly with, "I am glad to see thee back, William. Thy Aunt Ann hath been here and reported that a gipsy-woman hath been dragged to gaol for wilfully affrighting a gentleman's horse. I was concerned lest it might be thine."

"Nay, nay," he answered, after a hearty kiss, "I am more fortunate. Trotter is a steady beast. I saw the gentleman thrown. He is

severely hurt. And strangely enough, Sally, I imagine him to be the one who saved your Uncle Grace from robbery on the Bromsgrove road. At least he bears the same name."

There was eager questioning of the where, and how, that elicited that he and Joseph Roper had together witnessed the accident and rendered assistance. "And would you believe," he said, turning to his sister, busied in preparations for supper, "I could have fancied I had old Mr. Webb's dying head upon my knee?"

Mrs. Perkins, who had heard without remark the pitiful tale of Madam West's uncontrollable grief, now took him up sharply: "Always fancying likenesses, Will! It's time you left off that bad habit. What can you remember of a man who hath been dead twenty years? And if all you have told me of Joseph Roper's tricks be true, the less you see of his company the better."

It was Catherine, the autocrat, who gave her opinion.

"We leave Nottingham for Aston in the morning. Mr. Roper lives beyond Southwell. His company is not to be anticipated. The faults of a young man should not be cast up to him after twenty years." It was William the oracle who replied. Clearly the dictation of Mrs. Perkins was no longer acceptable.

Mrs. Hutton jogged to Aston on her pillion the next day to break the journey. After a night's repose, and a characteristic grave farewell of the farm and Quaker kin, came the return home to her children, and the wifely duties pressing on her mind.

William himself had scarcely recovered the shock of Squire West's accident. All the way home his thoughts alternated between that, Roper's project for the mill, and his own care for his wife's comfort, the wife now so inexpressibly dear to him.

Over and over again a livid face seemed to rise before him, sometimes as Mr. Webb's, sometimes as the squire's.

"Am I bewitched?" he asked himself, as he saw a younger replica of the same pale face on his own door-step. "Catherine is right. I must shake off the bad habit. I see Peter Webb everywhere."

"What ails thee lad? Thou'rt white as a clout," he asked of Vill.

"I've had a fright, master," he said, after Mrs. Hutton had gone indoors to greet her little ones and Patience in her sober undemonstrative fashion.

"A fright?"

"Aye, sir. About one o'clock this morning I awoke, hearing a strange creaking and grating noise. Some one was attempting to

force open our shop door: trying to raise the upper half."

"Ah! And what did you do? Call Mr. Thomas?"

"No, sir. I heard the fellow cursing the tightness of the bolts, and jumped from the counter, snatching up my pistol in the dark."

"Pistol! How came you by a pistol?"

"Jack Cotterwell lent it to me, sir, when I went to him about the bolts."

"But Dr. Dowler said you would never be able to pull a trigger. What use would a pistol be to you?" put Mr. Hutton sharply.

Vill smiled. "Not with my right hand, sir, I know, but I learned to do it with my left."

"Ah, well, what then?" His master was growing impatient.

"I ran to the creaking door, and called out 'You ruffian, I'll send a bullet through you if you are not off!' Then I cried aloud, 'Are you ready, Pat? Now, Mr. Thomas!' and cocked my pistol close to the chink he had made. The villain must have heard, and fancied all three were there armed ready to dart upon him, for I drew back one of the old bolts with a rattle as if to open the door. I heard something drop on the stone with a metallic ring, and off the steps went the man, and down the Bull Ring as fast as legs could pelt."

"Well?"

"I wiped the sweat from my brow, and went into the house, to arouse Mr. Thomas."

"You should have done that at first, and not let the rascal escape!"

"I had no time to think of that, sir. I was afraid the thief might force his way in before Mr. Thomas got here."

Mr. Hutton smiled.

"Ah, well, perhaps he might."

His thoughts ran on the slowness of Thomas. Vill's on the distance of the sleeper's chamber in the other house.

"Yet, sir, I do not suppose he could have done," Vill added proudly. "The lock had been forced, but the new bolts had not yielded, though, as you may see, sir, the old woodwork is dinted and chipped. Probably he counted on being undisturbed."

"Mother-wit is oft-times better than bravery, my lad. Thine hath served both thee and me. And there was no lack of bravery either, though thy face is white as a girl's with the fright. What had the fellow dropped?"

"This," said Vill, exhibiting a formidable iron lever, more than a foot long.

"Um! That would have cracked a skull as readily as a door. I marvel the ruffian took to his heels." So saying, upstairs went William to talk over the matter to Thomas in

the warehouse, Vill first stopping to say, "Pray, sir, do not say anything to mistress. It is no use to alarm her or the children; and she might object to my having the pistol."

Vill's readiness to use the said pistol instead of calling for assistance, and his quick-witted appeal to imaginary helpers, were equally discussed with the security of his bolts, and the inconsistence of his apparent fright with his boldness. But neither brother had any insight into the cause beneath the surface.

Nothing was known of his dealing with the would-be robber beyond what he himself chose to tell. Nothing of his recognition of the man's voice. Nothing of his threat to denounce him, or to set justice on his track if he did not quit the town that very night; or the scoundrel's counter threat to break in, and if taken accuse the apprentice of confederacy. Nothing of this parley which preceded the appeal to the pistol and to other help as if at hand.

The young man's fright had far other source than cowardice. His duty to his master, to his father, and to himself were at conflict.

He had slept on the hard counter with Jack Cotterwell's pistol by his side for months, prepared to rise and defend his master's property at all hazards.

But no sooner had the occasion come, and passed, than a clammy sweat had broken on his brow as the enormity of his act in raising an armed hand against his father, whatever he might be, burst upon him.

What, if Francis Field had forced his way in and the pistol been fired, might have been the result?

He leaned against the jamb of the splintered door, sick and faint with his own imaginings.

He was still trembling when he had groped his way to the remote bedchamber of Mr. Thomas, in the private house; and he had not recovered his colour or his composure when that leisurely individual had succeeded in finding the tinderbox and striking a light.

"The lad was white and shivering, whether with apprehension or at his own temerity there is no telling," explained Thomas. "If he had not been in such a desperate hurry, and had come for me first, we might have caught the robber!"

"Thou wouldst never have caught the robber," quoth his elder brother dryly. "Snails catch no mice." At which Thomas only laughed and turned to business.

The subject was not therefore dropped. It was discussed over Mr. Hutton's counter, over the counters of his friends, was talked about at street corners, and in parlours.

Orders went into Jack Cotterwell for Vill's spring bolts, and Vill had his share of the profits, a result never contemplated by Francis Field.

Then about a week after the event a parcel was laid upon the shop-counter by a lad who ran away without a word. It was addressed

"To Mr. Vill, at Mr. Hutton's."

It contained a handsome silver-mounted pistol, and a card on which was written, "A Tribute to Fidelity and Bravery." There was no clue to the sender, the writing was evidently feigned.

Vill was proud of the gift and of the inscription. Both he ascribed to his master, who, out of deference to his wife's opinions, might not care to present such a gift openly. William Hutton was as much in the dark as the recipient.

Vill took off the broken door-lock, repaired it, and set about contriving a better one, but no more did he sleep with a loaded pistol by his side.

Yet he might have done for all the call there was to use it. Or for the dog procured to guard the deserted warehouse in the night.

About a fortnight later, Mr. Hutton was told that a man had been taken to the Dungeon for an attempt to rob the Bromsgrove Post-boy. He had previously been seen hanging

about the Post Office and the Gateway, and was supposed to be the one who had tried to force Mr. Hutton's door.

The bookseller would fain have induced Vill to see the robber for identification, if only of his voice. But Vill insisted that as he could not see the man through a door, neither could he distinguish his voice so as to swear his life away.

He was spared the necessity.

The Dungeon was a horrible den in Peck Lane, enclosing behind a pair of spiked gates a courtyard and a building as insecure as it was filthy. It was the successor to a still older and filthier dungeon in the rear of Garland House.

Before the prisoner could be removed to Warwick for trial he had made his escape.

A broken bar at a window and a dangling line of knotted tailor's-list hanging from the spikes above the gates remained to tell how it had been effected.

CHAPTER II.

A KEEPSAKE.

With the capture and escape of Francis Field, of whose indentity Vill never had a doubt, much of the young man's alarm died away. He argued within himself that when the official description of the long-limbed, black-browed man was printed in the *Hue and Cry* and sent broadcast, he would find Warwickshire too narrow for safety. And as he breathed more freely, his colour returned, and he took his Sunday afternoon walks abroad once more with firm and elastic step. Now and then Jack Cotterwell, a rough but genuine friend, shared his rambles, or little Miss Catherine would trip by his side, or four-year-old Thomas beg to be taken by the hand. But there were days when he preferred to be alone, and then, whether by inadvertence or design, he was certain to take his way through New Street, then an irregular medley of shops and private dwellings, containing King Edward's School, the Post Office, and an inn or two, interspersed with glimpses of garden-

ground, and set for some length with trees cropped to pattern. And whatever might be the nature of his thoughts he was certain to leave New Street behind and seek the umbrageous suburbs by way of Easy Hill, where stood the mansion which to him was a casket of rare gems, a living pearl the chief.

The hill was not so steep as to take his breath, yet it is true his steps were slower whilst he had Baskerville House in view, and there was an eager wistful look upon his face that died away when he had left the house and grounds behind. And many a time from the wild heath beyond, where bricks and mortar began to intrude on gorse and heather, did he look back on the mansion that had been the first to break the solitude west of New Hall. It was quite a red-letter day for him if by chance he caught the flutter of a well-known lady's scarf, or the expanded glories of a hooped skirt between the stately lines of trim evergreens, or the vision of a beauteous face at a window.

And, oh! the ecstacy of that day when Mr. Baskerville, standing at his own gate, invited him into the grounds, and after some kindly chat, finally led him into the fairy palace of a house to be introduced to Mrs. Baskerville as "The young fellow who had proved himself a match for a daring burglar."

It was not because he was particularly proud of such introduction, or because the pleasant lady in the rich damask dress and tall cap saluted him so affably and regaled him with cowslip-wine and cake, or because Mr. Baskerville turned the conversation from the attempted burglary to his spring bolt, the new lock he was said to be planning, and his faculty for wood carving, but because Mr. Baskerville's black-eyed ward sat there and listened with manifest interest, now and then throwing in a word.

It was that cast a golden halo over his reception under that highly favoured roof, the shrine of his adorable divinity. And when he would have taken his respectful leave with a formal bow had not she put forth her soft white hand to meet his as frankly as Mrs. Baskerville had done?

That Miss Rebecca held herself stiffly aloof concerned him not, so long as Cordelia Carew had placed her warm hand in his and said she "honoured bravery."

The touch thrilled him through and through. He walked home as if he trod on air. He was lost in a mist of rapture and delight. He spent the evening in bewildered reverie; his dreams were glorified. He waked on the morrow to a consciousness of his apprenticeship—and worse, the parentage which made

the only inseparable barrier between himself and hope.

Fortune might be achieved, and beauty might condescend, but to a dishonoured name —*never*.

He went about his morning work, filled with a sweet solace, but painfully conscious that nothing more remained for him.

That was in August, about three weeks after the prisoner had made his escape from the old Dungeon. In the afternoon, a well-dressed man booted and spurred, came into the shop, whilst Vill was selling a slate to a school-boy, and asked for Mr. Hutton; then cast his eyes around as if taking a mental inventory, and lounging on the counter with very-much-at-home familiarity, stared hard at Vill.

"Here is my master, sir," said Vill, as Mr. Hutton, already showing a tendency to portliness, appeared at the inner doorway.

"Hah! old friend! There you are as fresh as the morning. Shake hands. You see I have kept my word. Have come down to Birmingham to look about me before I pitch my tent," cried the stranger.

"Indeed?" said Mr. Hutton, "I did not expect you. I imagined you were settled on your own property at Southwell. Is not your old home to your taste?"

"My taste? Damme! I was never born for a country life, sir. There is no turning my sword into a reaping-hook. My elder brother will take farm and mill both off my hands at a fair rental; and that will content both. By-the-bye, coming over Handsworth Heath I gave a look at your shut-up mill. If 'twere mine I should turn it into a corn mill."

"Ah, so you said before, and so the millwrights say."

"You would be wise to take their advice. I have only seen the outside. Suppose we ride thither in the morning and go over it. I can then advise you as a practical man. But, damme, don't you mean to invite your old friend into your parlour to see your wife? I missed my chance in Nottingham."

Roper never missed a chance for lack of assurance. It had not been William Hutton's intent to invite him in. He could scarcely give him an open rebuff after the good-will he had shown about the idle mill.

He was introduced to Mrs. Hutton, and did his best to make himself agreeable, giving to his natural effrontery an air of bluff-heartiness.

She, however, had not forgotten her sister-in-law's summing up of Joseph Roper, and though she hospitably invited him to "take a dish of tea," she scanned him narrowly in her quiet way.

She did not altogether like his answer to a question she put with womanly feeling.

"Pray sir, canst thou tell how the unfortunate gentleman fareth, who met with the lamentable accident in Sherwood Forest. Doth he still survive?"

"Aye, madam he survives, but in hopeless case. Poor devil, he'll never cross a saddle or follow the hounds again. He broke his stiff back sure enough."

"Alack! It will be a sad affliction for the poor lady."

"Aye, damme, if he lingers long. A rich widow may soon console herself."

"In thy opinion, maybe," was Mrs. Hutton's grave reply, "women judge differently of women." And so much dignity was there in the little wife's rebuke, that Roper told himself he had "put his foot in it."

"I do not care for thy friend Joseph Roper," said she that night in connubial confidence. "He savoureth too much of the world. And he hath neither a feeling heart nor an honest eye."

He contrived to ingratiate himself with William Hutton, nevertheless, and during the few weeks he spent in the town set him all agog to convert the paper-mill into a corn-mill which was to grind golden wheat into golden coin. He spoke with all the confidence of a man who had a mill profitably at work.

Of course the millwrights who would have the job of alteration echoed all he said—not in the hearing of Mrs. Hutton, or of steady-going Mr. Thomas, but in the smoke-room of the "Swan," where, as William waggishly observed, the waiters needed to go about with bellows to blow away the smoke so that a man might see the faces of his fellows, and where, indeed, the tin ventilators in the windows were insufficient to dispel the fumes of the long clay pipes in all mouths. Not that Mr. Hutton was himself a smoker, but he could drink a horn of good home-brewed ale for sociability, and Birmingham men did then much of their business over a pipe and a pot of ale in the public smoke-rooms of the town.

Possibly persuasion was easier under such circumstances. In William Hutton's case, he had capital locked up in land and buildings lying idle. To convert the useless into the profitable was desirable.

The millwrights were set to work; and so, in time, was the corn mill. But cheating went on as before, with greater facilities. It proved all loss and no profit.

"I tell thee what, Bill," said Thomas to him one day in the following summer; "thou art grinding thy guineas, thy books, and thy paper down in thy fine mill instead of grain. Folk come into the shop and the warehouse

for goods we have not got to sell. Thou'lt grind thy good business into the dust ere long at this rate."

"Ah, Thomas, it's an ill race when the tortoise can reprove the hare. He who is not satisfied with sure gains, courts certain losses. I've been a dupe caught in the lure by knaves. Books and paper raised me up. The mill shall not pull me down. I will close it."

He did close it without delay. He went over his accounts minutely, took stock carefully, and found he had lost in hard cash, time, and crippled business little less than a thousand pounds.

Years before he might have shed tears over his losses. That tearful stage had long been passed. He only braced his energies to repair them. Again he was seen with his apron on superintending every part of his business. Was always on the spot when wanted. Might be seen setting the stitching frame in order, or the press, wielding the mallet to beat the book-leaves smooth and close, or the knife to pare and dress the skins for covers, or pasting, mottling, gilding, lettering, and the work was never better done. He was on the alert alike for shop and warehouse, to take orders or see them executed, to inspirit his assistants by his own example. His shelves refilled and customers came back.

His first order had been "retrenchment." His had never been a luxurious household, and he made the request to his good wife with reluctance.

"I am sorry, my dear Sally, to have made this a necessity by my own imprudent haste to grow rich. I've made more haste than good speed. It hurts me to cramp thee in small matters. But thy frugality and excellent housewifery helped me of old, and I must tax thy care and economy again."

"It will be no hardship to save and spare; to help thee forward now thine eyes are opened, and thy own hand is on the plough. God blesseth honest endeavour."

"He hath blessed me with a good wife, Sally. I have never heard a reproach from your lips in all these three years of inconsiderate folly. The sting of self-reproach hath been keener."

"It is useless to hold a candle to the blind. It is cruel to reproach a man whose own conscience smiteth him. Let us rather rejoice that thy affairs have not gone beyond remedy. In parting with thy horse, thou hast led the way in retrenchment, and made it light."

"Ah, Sally, I've no use for Trotter now; but I had best have sold him many months ago. The man who keeps four legs to carry his two is apt to grow proud as well as in-

dolent. I'm resolved never to keep a horse again. My own limbs are stout enough to carry me England over. Sinews and energies stiffen with disuse."

He had sold his horse at a low figure to get rid of him.

Coming into his shop when the bargain was concluded, he laid his silver handled knife on the counter before his favourite apprentice.

"Here Vill," said he, "you have worked hard over stock-taking, so take that. It was given me as a keepsake when I was about your age, and I give it as a keepsake to you. It is good metal, and with care may serve your turn for years. Somehow, at times you remind me of the old gentleman from whom I had it."

Vill had long coveted his master's curious knife, not merely for its three good blades, but for the implement at the end for which he could find many a purpose. His eyes spoke his thanks better than his tongue, and into his breeches pocket it went ready for use.

"Master," said he, "I am more obliged to you for this than for the pistol. It will do me better service. There was no bravery in threatening a thief behind a bolted door. I felt ashamed to accept that gift."

Mr. Hutton looked him full in the face. 'The gift was none of mine, Vill; I have no

love for fire-arms. It came from some one with more spirit than common sense. Thy presence of mind and ready wit were more commendable than thy bravery, as I told thee, and thy fidelity than either. The nightly watch in the lonely warehouse for expected robbers was brave. And I cannot deny that the stand made behind an old rotten wooden door was bold, seeing there was no help within call. But I am glad you have the modesty not to plume yourself upon it."

One of well-bred Mr. Webb's maxims, in turn impressed on William Hutton's household, was, "Never interrupt a speaker."

Vill waited until his master's speech was ended before he asked wonderingly: "If you did not give me the pistol, sir, who did?"

"That I cannot tell. Silver mounted pistols are not commonly presented to 'prentice lads. The giver had more money than wit, whoever he was."

So saying Mr. Hutton went into the house to change his coat and report the sale of Trotter, leaving Vill in a perfect state of bewilderment. "Whoever he was," transposed itself into "Whoever was he?" and the words jostled each other in his brain, leaving him farther and farther from a solution.

Ah, if he had but surmised the giver!

CHAPTER III.

HAD THE TIME NOT COME?

Not many days had elapsed since Vill became possessor of Mr. Webb's well-preserved knife, and of a perplexing puzzle over the donor of the pistol at the same time, when he spoke to his master one night after an hour spent in Digbeth at Cotterwell's smithy.

"Sir, do you wish to sell your mill?"

"Sell it? Aye, and glad to get rid of it. 'Tis a monument of my own folly and other men's roguery. Do you know any one likely to buy?"

"Jack Cotterwell does, sir; a Mr. Honeyborn who is in want of a mill for polishing brass nails."

"Tell your friend Jack to send him to me. If the mill suits he shall have it a bargain."

And so it came about that the mill in which so many hundreds had been sunk, was sold for eighty pounds as an encumbrance to be got rid of at any price.

Another small mill on Handsworth Heath changed hands about the same time; a metal-

rolling mill by the pool. The buyer was one Mathew Boulton, a maker of fancy steel goods. He was a man of enterprise, and he bought designing there to concentrate all his energies. Hutton, in building his mill, had divided his time and attention, and had well nigh brought disaster on his legitimate business. Boulton, dwelling on the spot, opened out ere long an enchanted vista to a temple of fame and fortune. The one mill had swallowed up coin like a quicksand, the other was literally to coin it.

Many are the avenues to that same temple of Fortune. William Hutton, with his budget of books and papers, had set a firm foot down in one, and in that self-same town were many journeying thither by divers ways with offerings more diverse. Even so insignificant an individual as his apprentice Vill was, like a child learning to walk, feeling his way in the same direction, with no notion of any fortune but what he could achieve by his own hand in accordance with the dictum of his master.

In forcing Mr. Hutton's lock Francis Field had unwittingly set Vill's active brain to work, and he and Jack Cotterwell were busy devising a lock that should defy the burglar. Locks were made in this attempt which were so far improvements as to meet with ready sale in the town and keep the smithy fire aglow late

and early, if they did not satisfy Vill. But if Vill did not achieve success all at once, it was certain to come in the end, though he had little or no scientific knowledge, and his first experiments had been in repairing old locks on his master's premises. Wood, whalebone, cardboard, were the materials out of which he constructed his models, his chief implement being his knife; his only available time before and after business hours. There is no saying when he did his *thinking;* the brain acts unconsciously sleeping or waking. There is one thing certain, his persistence in mastering such mechanical difficulties as stood in the way of his perfect ideal tended to keep him and his friend Jack out of those haunts where vice flourishes and vitality is sapped. It was a smoking and drinking generation, but the two young men did little of either. Without any written agreement on paper or parchment, Vill and Jack were in business partnership, old Cotterwell allowing his son free use of the forge when his own customers were served.

And so matters stood when early in the year 1763 the Nottingham carrier braved the heavy penalties on surreptitious letter-carrying, and the more dreaded danger of floods and snowdrifts by the way, and handed in a small brown paper parcel which could deceive nobody. There was a letter within from Mrs.

Perkins in reply to one sent months before, which contained a veritable budget of news. It was quite a lengthy epistle for her, since Catherine Perkins was not given to waste time or words in correspondence.

"Nottingham, Jan. 20th, 1763.

"Dear Brother,

"I hope this will find you all well, as it leaves us, thank God! If you had grander doings in Birmingham at the King's Coronation than we had here, Nottingham hath been illuminated more sensibly. The town hath been lit with fine oil lamps this winter. To look from Bearward Lane End all the way into the Market Place at night, one might fancy the stars had dropt down from the sky. Boast no more of Birmingham. If you had had such lamps, or even a good bank like Smith's to lodge your spare money in, no thief would have tried to force your shop door.

"Squire West, of West Hall, died last September, just before the assizes. His death went against the woman who frightened his horse so wickedly. She was proved to be the daughter of that deer-stealer Harris, who was hanged on Gallows Hill, and she was transported to the plantations for fourteen years, as the judge said, to keep her worthy brother company. She railed and swore at the judge

and jury like a trooper, yelled out that Squire West had been the death of her father, and vowed vengeance against the Wests root and branch. Nottingham is well rid of the vixen. I heard all this over my stall in the Market.

"Sam hath written to me. Now the Seven Years' War is over he expects to be discharged, and will come to live in Nottingham. He hath married a soldier's widow and hath a family. I shall make a home for them here, and he must follow his trade as a whip maker for a living. Your Aunt Wards have lost their lacemaking servant. She was profitable to them, and they cannot replace her. Some man came after her, and she went off in the night without warning. They cannot account for it, she had been so sedate and pious since her conversion by Mr. Wesley. Our old aunts take her loss much to heart; as I should if Susannah left me. She is given to good deeds. Hath been nursing Aunt Ann for a week or more. Aunt is going fast, and Robert Tanner hath already bespoken a younger wife to step into her old shoes.

"Commend us both heartily to thy dear wife and to brother Thomas, and tell thy boy and girl to be good, obedient children, and they shall come and see their Aunt Catherine again in the summer. I trust thou art prospering in soul as well as in estate. Thou wilt weary

of reading this long letter as I weary of writing. So fare-thee-well.

"Thy affectionate sister,

"CATHERINE PERKINS."

"Sister Perkins hath repaired the hole in her correspondence this time," quoth William Hutton, handing the well filled quarto-sheet to his wife. "She is going to take Sam in hand now, and give him a fresh start. She hath only kept her house open expecting the wanderer's return. And no doubt she is nourishing Aunt Ann in her last hours. Ah, Sally dear, Catherine is a rare woman. I owe all I possess—wife and all—to the start she gave me."

"I agree with her about the bank, and will talk to Mr. Taylor about it, I know he doth a little banking in a quiet way. But I don't see what we want with lamps to increase the levies and light rogues and drunkards. Honest men stay at home after dark."

"But honest folk fall sick, and doctors are wanted," put in his wife.

"Well, there are always lanthorns handy; what more is necessary?" and he turned away not caring to discuss the whole of the letter.

It had furnished him with open themes for conversation on his own hearth and abroad,

and with ample matter for private reflection. The death of Squire West did not affect him more than such news about strangers commonly affects others; but the flight of Dolly and the transportation of Peg set him seriously considering his position with regard to Vill.

He was the custodian of a secret which began to trouble him the more he saw his apprentice was not cast in a common mould.

For some time he had debated within himself whether it was or was not his duty to reveal to the young man all he knew, and call upon Dolly Field to substantiate her own statement. With the latent sluggishness of the Hutton temperament he had debated when he should have acted.

"I have let the family failing overcome me," he reasoned, taking himself to task. "Supine delay hath overslept opportunity. Dolly's flight hath disarranged my plans. There can be no appeal to her, or to Peg now the virago hath been transported. I imagined imprisonment her portion, and trusted to find her safe in the old gaol. Ah, imagination may mislead.

"Poor Dolly! Hath she fled again to escape her matrimonial master, or hath she fallen into his clutches? It is clear she hath found no clue to Vill's parentage. Should I

do well to disturb his mind with vague imaginings? He hath been a faithful servant to me, and might continue so to serve when his time is out. But the inventive talent he hath may lead him to carve out fortune with his own hand. I will say naught to disturb his mind until he hath brought his new lock to perfection—And why then? I have done my duty by the lad. He hath had the gates of knowledge opened to him; hath gained business method and thrift. Probably a better inheritance than he hath lost. If he careth not to continue here when he goeth free, I will not grudge to lend him ten pounds for a start. He hath better chances than lay before me. Hath made friends under this roof. Is well content and happy. 'Twould not advantage the young man to fill his head with vain fancies. Dolly's secret hath troubled me. It shall not trouble him. In his own head and hand he holdeth fortune, if I err not. Should I set him to grasp a shadow and lose the substance. Nay—I would wrong him—and myself. The time hath not come."

So arguing in a narrow circle Vill was left in the dark, when light would have been blessedness.

He too kept his secret under close lips; it was part of his nature. It was not the nature of his master. If an invisible veil of mystery

enshrouded Vill against his will William Hutton had been caught in the folds, and would have been glad to release himself. Had Vill but dropped a hint of Francis Field's appearance, William Hutton would have opened his lips to some purpose.

At all events he had not selfishly hid the light of his apprentice under a bushel. His quaintly fluent tongue extolling the young fellow's ingenuity had called general attention to the locks already completed, and raised expectation of something wonderful in progress. It may be he was returning through Jack Cotterwell a hundredfold the service rendered to himself more than twenty years before by the young smith's father, when he was only the bellow-maker's journeyman.

If the time had not come for telling Vill that he was supposed to be a stolen child, it had pretty nearly arrived for the completion of Vill's new model.

Towards the close of that snowy, sleety, slushy February, there was a trampling and rumbling in the street.

"Here comes the pattern-card," cried Mr. Hutton, with a smile, as the well-known pair of long-tailed, cream-coloured horses brought their master's elaborately painted carriage to a stop before the door. "Vill, go and assist Mr. Baskerville to alight," a necessary pre-

caution, seeing that carriage steps were clumsy and far from the ground.

Vill needed no second bidding. The mud-bespattered door was opened and his young arm at the service of the great japanner and printer before the gorgeous footman hanging on by the straps behind could alight from his uncomfortable perch.

"So, my young friend, what progress have you to report?" were the first words of Mr. Baskerville. "In what state is the wonderful model?"

"I thank you, sir," answered the 'young friend' with a respectful bow, "I hope to finish it to-night, or in the morning."

"Your servant, sir," said the bookbinder and the printer simultaneously, and then out came the exquisitely-painted snuffbox of the latter as a preliminary to conversation, whilst the former asked: "What orders this morning, sir?"

"A request before the orders, sir"—presenting the box open to the other's finger and thumb—"Pray oblige me with permission for the young inventor here to bring his model to Baskerville House when complete, say to-morrow, or the following afternoon; I like to encourage budding genius to expand, and may be able to serve him if the lock bear out expectation."

Mr. Hutton thanked the printer, as if the favour had been done himself, or a son of his own. "Vill hath reason to be proud of your notice, sir," he said. "And I do not doubt his model will justify your favour."

So satisfactorily did the model work that Mr. Baskerville, with the lock in his hand, conducted the young fellow, when he arrived, to a parlour on the other side the spacious hall, where sat Mrs. Baskerville and the two younger ladies at work, an open harpsichord telling whence had come the deliciously sweet music which had caught the unaccustomed ear of Vill on entering the house, and filled him with a new sensation as of melody unheard save in his dreams. It had no affinity with the droning psalms of Patience, the hymning of the Meeting House, or the humorous songs in which his master indulged, or the scraping of the blind fiddler who frequented the Bull Ring. It was sweet as the tinkling of a wayside brook, and had entranced him whilst he waited in the hall—or was it the ravishing voice that had accompanied the harpsichord?

The one young lady rose and put her knotting down to courtesy graciously, the other simply inclined the head she raised from her tambour-frame, their elder half rose and turned to salute the new-comer whoever he

might be, and set her ball of knitting-wool rolling off her knee across the carpet.

Vill stooped to raise it, and perhaps that might account for his heightened colour, as, hat in hand, he acknowledged his reception with a silent and deferential bow, which had, however, not one particle of servility in its bend. It could scarcely account for the fainter reflection of that colour on the cheek of the taller and darker maiden.

"See, dame," began the velvet-coated japanner to his wife, "here is a lock which I fancy would trouble the rogues who ran away with the tea-caddies and standishes last week. And here is the inventor, a young man to develop so much ingenuity. If he only put as safe a lock upon his heart he may remain secure from the wiles of your tormenting sex as long as he will. You must all wish him success."

"In locking up your goods or his own heart, Guardy?" asked Miss Carew archly, as she advanced to inspect the model with a playful assumption of connoisseurship.

"Um! Both, my dears."

"It is useless to lock the warehouse door when the goods are stolen," quoth Miss Marston with a double meaning intended for the special understanding of Cordelia, but which shot straight into the conscious breast

of Vill, who, all confusion, could only stammer forth,

"Human hearts are not to be guarded like warehouse doors. My skill doth not extend so far."

"Well, I am more concerned about my warehouse," responded Mr. Baskerville, "and as my shelves can be refilled as readily as human hearts I do not care how soon I have two or three well wrought specimens from your model, Mr. Vill. And now, misses, having put our modest young inventor to the blush, I will take him round the works whilst you provide for us a dish of tea."

Surely Vill might esteem himself in high favour.

Not only did Mr. Baskerville carry him, Mr. Hutton's apprentice, over his works, and show him the various processes of varnishing and lacquering, but he showed him the type he had cast with his own hand, the ink he had mixed, the paper he had manufactured, and pulled a sheet for a sample to show how he worked the press, also with his own hand.

"All type had to be brought from Holland until I undertook to design and cast a superior style of letter with my own hand. I had sunk £600 before I had produced a single letter to satisfy me; yet now my fount

hath not a rival in the world. And here you see the result And I would bind the books with my own hand, too," said he, "did not thy master throw his heart into his work as I do. And now, young man, let me say that whether you take to bookbinding, or to wood-carving, or to lock-making, throw thy heart into thy work and success is certain. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' And look not to men for thy reward, for it oft lingers till life's sun be setting, nay, may come too late for aught but an epitaph. But come, tea will be ready, and cynical reflection is not for sanguine youth."

What was the notice of the master, the aroma of the tea, or the dainty china, or the japanned tray, or the silver filligree sugar-basket to the marvel that he, the humble apprentice, received his cup from the proud hands of Miss Carew, and breathed the same air with her! He had thrown his heart at her feet, and the work of his life would be for her, but neither Mr. Baskerville nor she could know that.

CHAPTER IV.

A MOSS ROSEBUD.

Ere long Jack Cotterwell had produced working specimens of the model lock, the first of which Vill offered to his master, with some natural pride, toned down, it might be, by the remembrance who and what had set his wits to work in that direction.

It was fastened to the door, and more than one practical locksmith confessed himself baffled in attempts to pick it.

Mr. Baskerville, who, as he said, was always ready to foster latent genius, not only ordered several duplicate copies to affix to the doors of house and works at Easy Hill—how different then from the same spot in this generation—but suggested that no more samples should be offered to the public until a patent was obtained.

Moreover, he volunteered to instruct Vill how to make his application, and, providing the young men had no funds, was ready to advance the means.

"The termination of the long war has set

so many ruffians loose to prowl about and prey upon the public, that the demand is certain to be great. A secure lock is an article of general utility and requirement," said he.

Thanks to the profitable spring-bolt, and to the thrifty habits of both young men, there was no need to draw on the enterprising printer's coffers. Each had a small but growing sum safely stowed away. Patents were easy to obtain and cost less under the old laws than the present. But though no elaborate specification was required they were all secured with "red tape," and the preliminary negotiations made many journeys to the gracious and experienced adviser necessary.

Vill had never for his own purposes encroached on his master's time. Though he seemed to be striking out a new line for himself, he had stuck steadily to business. This was not unnoted, and Mr. Hutton to be no whit behind Mr. Baskerville in generosity afforded the young man opportunities for consultation.

This was generally in the evening, and being in the summer months when the days are long and bright, he might be seen—sometimes bearing a parcel of books from his master—with the glow of the western sun upon his face, and another glow in heart and

eyes, wending his way through New Street and its continuation Swinford Street to the great house wherein his fate seemed to lie.

Mr. Baskerville as a rule received him in the library, that room which had first waked the creative spirit dormant in the boyish brain. There letters and documents were read or draughted, and, his business done, Vill departed. But not altogether as he came. Some way or other, either when he entered or before he left, Miss Carew was almost sure either to descend the noble staircase, or to cross the wide hall. She might only recognize his respectful bow with a graceful if distant courtesy. On one occasion she stopped to ask: "Do you think you are likely to obtain your patent speedily?" adding, "I hope the affair is prospering."

"How could it be otherwise than prospering, madam," said he with a beating heart and a low bow, "when yourself and Mr. Baskerville graciously vouchsafe to be interested."

"Certainly, sir, we *all* wish you success," was the reply with an emphasis on the "all," as if to repress any belief that the "interest" was special. There was another bow, another courtesy, she entered the parlour, and he went down the steps and the drive to the great gates, hardly able to contain the fulness of his delight at her sweetness and condescension.

That she seemed half to repent it mattered nothing, she had expressed a hope for his success.

This was speedily followed by the fear lest the presumption of his own speech should have given offence, and a little torment in which the minor matter of his desired patent was forgotten.

It so happened that another evening late in July he was earlier than usual to arrive and to depart. As he closed the library door behind him, the western sun poured a flood of radiance through the richly-tinted staircase-window, dyeing the marble pavement with an ætherial mosaic of purple, crimson, blue, and amber, and caused him to look up at the lacquered swinging lamps, reburnished by the setting sun and lit with mimic flame.

At that moment from some unknown door or passage came Miss Carew in a robe of pure white muslin, to be at once transfigured by the radiance. She was carrying a small vase of Derby china filled with freshly-gathered roses.

Did the strong light dazzle her eyes, or did her shapely elbow come in contact with the glorified statue at the staircase foot, and jerk the vase she carried? There was a splash of water, and a shower of crimson petals on the floor, with a flower or two in their midst.

Vill sprang forward to gather them up.

"I trust I did not startle you, madam," he said, as he picked up tenderly a deep red rose, a variegated York-and-Lancaster, and one or two moss rosebuds.

"Oh, no! The sun dazzled me—that was all. I thank you, sir."

There was an opening white moss rosebud amongst the group. "How beautiful!" he exclaimed, singling it out, as he restored them. "This is the first white moss rose I have seen. I could fancy it an emblem of purity and loveliness."

As he spoke, in restoring the coveted flowers their fingers touched, their eyes met. There was a look of intense longing in his—of something indescribable in hers; a consciousness that yet rebelled against itself, but there dawned a light on both that came not from the setting sun.

"You can keep the moss rosebud, sir," said she, with mingled grace and dignity, as if to cover her momentary confusion. "We have plenty in the garden—and my vase was over full."

If she meant to lessen the favour she failed. Such a flash of delight she had never seen in mortal eyes before, as he cried in a tone of rapture:

"Oh, Miss Carew! how shall I thank you?

I shall treasure the fair bud all my days. It will ever remind me of the giver."

"It will not preserve its fairness many days, sir; I hope I shall not fade quite so soon," she replied lightly, making an attempt to rally.

"It will retain its fragrance, and memory will restore the rest."

Let us charitably accredit the stained glass window with the crimson glow on both their faces, as Mr. Baskerville popped his bewigged head out at the library door and asked, "What is all that chattering about?"

"I spilled some of my roses, sir, and Mr. Vill—Mr. Field has obligingly picked them up for me."

"And you have paid him for his trouble I perceive,' with a glance at the rosebud still in Vill's hand. "I wish to have another word with you, Mr. Vill, I thought you were not gone. I had not heard the door."

The other word concerned the patent sought, and was soon said, but there were no more words from Miss Carew. She had fled to her own room; and there, behind a bolted door, she had thrown herself on the carpet and buried her face in the cushion of a low chair, in a passion of shame and self-reproach.

"Goodness! what must he think of me?

He think? What must I, Cordelia Carew, think of myself? What would my proud father have thought could he have seen his daughter descend to bestow a love-token on a mere bookseller's apprentice? Aye, a love-token! What else could it be? What else could he take it for? What else could have brought such a rapturous expression into his beautiful dark grey eyes? What had my guardian to say to him? Surely he doth not suspect aught? How shall I meet him if he doth? Oh, that little Catherine, what mischief she hath wrought with her innocent prattle! Nay, nay I must not blame the child. The root of the mischief lay in my own breast, she did but hold a mirror up to see it by."

Then she rose and paced the floor of the long room with her hands upon her breast as if she would crush it in upon her secret, her body swaying to and fro with every step she took.

"Oh, this must not be! This cannot go on," she said. "What hath he done or said to make me think and dream of him by night and by day? Hath he ever been other than respectful? Hath he ever until to-day let eyes or lips speak other language than courteous deference? Ah, I fear their silent melancholy reverence hath been more than

speech! How oft when Rebecca hath sneered at the 'Cupid stricken 'prentice lad whose dark eyes followed me so dolefully,' have I felt as if I could smite her! Yet now I have seen those dark eyes flame, I know from what fire within their light was kindled! Oh, that it should have been my fate to rouse a hopeless passion in his breast; to feel it in my own. Hopeless! Aye, hopeless! What other than hopeless could be such passion between the heiress of Oliver Carew and—a—'prentice; one, too, my guardian saith, apprenticed by the parish? I feel the very shame of it tingling to my finger ends! Yet how they thrilled at his touch—" and here her muttered communings took a softer turn—" and how the quick blood mounted to his forehead at the voice of Mr. Baskerville. Ah, I hope he had no word of rebuke for—Vill. Vill! What a singular name. How came he by it? Vill? I cannot ask, I dread Rebecca's raillery, the keen eyes of my guardian. Ah, what remains but to crush out hope in my own breast and his! And yet I cannot look on him and feel his origin is low. His features only speak of centuries of gentle birth. And he may rise. His master hath risen, my guardian hath risen. True, he had a small inheritance to start with—but as the good son bestowed the

rental on his aged parents, *he*, too, may be said to have risen from lowly beginnings by the force of his own character. And did my father despise *him* for trading, for working with his own hands? Nay, *I* am the answer. Hath he not placed me and my fortune in the charge of this self-created manufacturer? Ah, but he had name and friends, freeholders in the county. There is a wide gap between himself and Vill guardian would never overlook."

She was reasoning her own objections away. Again she flamed up suddenly with checks that burned red-hot, and stood stock-still.

"Overlook! What have not I overlooked? What hath gone with my pride, my maidenly shame, to argue such a plea even with myself, for one who hath never breathed a syllable of love to me? Oh that I should have sunk so low, so very low! Cordelia Carew, think what you are, and what you owe your ancestors, and do not bring dishonour on your lineage!"

And there we must leave her to fight the battle of love, and pride, and maidenly shame in the solitude of her own chamber, and follow Vill home with the cherished rosebud in the breast pocket of his collarless coat. To have worn it in a button-hole would have been to risk its loss from the first rough

'prentice lad he met, and he was as unwilling to hazard the destruction of his prize from a rude snatch, or a ruder scuffle, as he was to challenge inquiry from Patience or little Catherine at home.

He had no china vase, no water glass in which to place his fragrant treasure; only an old green physic bottle captured a year or two before to hold the flowers he endeavoured to imitate in wood. Since then he had been so absorbed in the designing of his lock, no carving had been done. Now he was free, and had a rare stimulus.

He had walked home in a sort of glorified dream, unable clearly to realize his own emotions, his own position. He had almost told Miss Carew that the half-blown bud was an emblem of herself, and she had allowed him to retain it. He had felt the thrilling contact of soft warm fingers, had looked into the softened depths of her eloquent black eyes, and read there that which had transfigured and intoxicated him for the hour.

Then came the inevitable reaction, the maddening conviction that his father's criminality was like the flaming sword before the gate of Eden. It was no new thought, but never before had it pressed upon him so severely. It seemed to burn into his brain, and scorch his brow. What to him would be the value

of inventions or patents if the finger of scorn were to be pointed at him as the son of Francis Field? What encouragement would there be to press onward and persevere, if the proud beauty of Miss Carew held out no wreath for the victor in the race?

He paced the narrow confines of his attic like a caged lion, his shoeless footfalls on the carpetless oak floor all unheard by the sleepers below; threw himself on his pallet bed, dressed as he was, in chafing desperation. It seemed as if the wine of life was held out to him in the cup of Tantalus. Restless, he rose again and walked about until the moon and stars went out, and a faint shimmering of dawn was visible.

He had walked himself into another frame of mind. He stood before his narrow diamond-paned window with folded arms, and looked out upon the sky, as he said,

"If I may not win her, I may at least deserve her, and with God's help I will! I must not pule and whine like a child for the star set so far above me. And Heaven forbid I should trouble the clear fountain of her life with the shadow of my mad passion. If I no longer dread spurning from her feet as a presumptuous 'prentice lad, I am too proud to disquiet her dreams with the hapless story of my love and life. I must seal my lips and

keep my tell-tale blood in order. Cordelia Carew is not for me! I surely saw the dawn of love in her eyes, as I see the dawn of day. I should do her a wrong by sign or word to seek a further token of her favour. The perfume of her sweet white rose hath filled my room; may it so fill and sanctify my life to her, as purely, as unobtrusively. And now let me to my task, and be grateful to Mr. Baskerville for calling me away ere I lost my senses altogether."

So he sat down in the first flush of dawn with Mr. Webb's silver-hafted knife in his hand to fashion a wooden copy of the moss rosebud before him, in the freshness of its beauty, all unaware of the strife in Cordelia's breast, or the new-born suspicions of Mr. Baskerville.

"Ah," said the latter to himself, with a tightening of his close lips, "I must keep a better watch over Cordelia. Flower-giving to Hutton's apprentice! That will never do. The young man is no doubt clever, and there is scope in Birmingham for such as he to make his way; but Oliver Carew would turn in his grave if his daughter made a love-match with one so far beneath her—as the world goes, that is. The youth hath bualities that would befit a higher station. And for his manners and his bearing—

well—he seems to have instincts that lift him out of the common herd. Nevertheless, we must not let them lift him too high in Miss Cordelia's good graces. I think it might be well if the gracious damsel went to West Hall for a month or two, for the benefit of her health, and companionship for the desolate widow. If I know aught of the young lady she will rebel, but—I do not encourage domestic rebellion. She goes." And a long-drawn pinch of snuff settled the matter.

CHAPTER V.

NOT RUNNING SMOOTHLY.

It was settled in Mr. Baskerville's own mind that his ward should be exiled to West Hall without delay, lest she should fall in the way of a handsome young man he had himself introduced to her notice, and with whom she already appeared in some danger of falling in love. A young man of talent, intelligence, and good principles—but of no fortune and no family. And when a matter was settled in Mr. Baskerville's own mind it was supposed to be settled *de facto*.

Straightway he wrote to Madame West, inviting her to visit Baskerville House, and promising that his ward Miss Carew should return with her to West Hall to cheer her loneliness, hinting that if she preferred it Miss Carew should pay her visit first.

Pending reply he sounded Miss Carew, and asked, "How would you like to visit your father's Nottinghamshire friends?"

Expecting a rebuff, he was not a little disconcerted by her ready "Like it? Vastly. It would be—delightful." He did not note

the break between her words, could not know that "delightful" was but a substitute for "all for the best."

"Well, Cordelia, I am disposed to give you a treat if Madame West will come hither for you," he said; but he thought to himself, "Was the young jade only fooling the lad? I have perhaps been too precipitate."

No answer came to him for several days. Meantime Vill came again, but the wary guardian (always disposed to be peevish when things did not take the course he expected) detected no signs of a meeting in the hall or in the grounds, and again he concluded he had been precipitate.

He was quite sure so, when Madame West's reply proved a courteous negative.

"It would give me pleasure to receive your charming ward and make her visit to Nottinghamshire agreeable," she wrote, "but I am engaged in legal controversy with the heir-at-law, who has *taken possession* of Westhorpe, and laid claim to West Hall, my own inheritance; and I should be no companion in my childless desolation for a high-spirited girl like Miss Carew. Old Mr. Bulwell lies at the point of death, and there is as yet no trace of my father or of his will. Complications are likely to arise which will not permit me to leave the home of my ancestors, or encourage

me to give invitations. Another year may find me more composed, and less the slave of untoward circumstances. Meanwhile commend me to the ladies and offer what apology you can to Miss Carew."

At another time the troubles of the childless widow would have called forth the warmest sympathy of the childless man; then he felt little but the disarrangement of the plan so comfortably settled in his own mind.

"Bah!" he exclaimed peevishly, "there's no dependence on a woman. Better be childless, than have the charge of two girls with their love-making and frippery. Rebecca must needs set her mind on Thomas Westley, regardless of my views, and now Cordelia shows a disposition to thwart me. She will not look on Joseph Marston, though she knows I favour him, and I find her giving my rare white moss roses to—nobody knows who. There is no leaving home for me until my great unique Bible is ready for the subscribers, or I might take wife and girls to Leamington Spa, or to Wolverley, out of the way. Then Rebecca and Mr. Westley would of course demur if I did. Would anybody be plagued with marriageable girls?

> 'For when they're dressed with care and cost,
> All tempting fine and gay;
> As men should serve a cucumber,
> They throw themselves away.'

Old Peachum was right! Well, Miss Cordelia, yours is fortunately a long minority, you either marry to please me or not at all, whilst I hold the reins."

Carew Mount had been leased to a stranger for the long minority of the heiress, four years of which had yet to expire, so there was no sending the young lady thither out of the way of a possible admirer.

He had wasted a good many pinches of snuff during his vexatious cogitations, and the men in his employ discovered that "something had put master out." Ere long, however, he gave a dry little cynical chuckle over his own politic arrangement to receive Vill in future in the counting-house, and the likelihood that the immediate grant of a patent would do away with his visits altogether.

"To withdraw my patronage now would show animus, and damage me as much as the young man. Open opposition would fan a spark to a flame. 'Tis well to appear blind. Now Hutton has disposed of his circulating library there will be few opportunities to exchange glances along with books; and the new library in Colmore Row will not cause the ladies to stray through the Gateway."

And so having satisfied himself he proceeded to work off a proof-sheet, and correct

the press, with the same cynical smile upon his lips.

Cordelia's disappointment when Madame West's letter was made known, not only disconcerted him, but threw him completely off his guard.

"There's no knowing the ways of women," he said to himself, "I'd have sworn that rosebud was a love token. Yet here is she upset because she is to remain in Birmingham with chances of meeting the fellow, instead of moping with a disconsolate widow in a remote country house! Could it be the stained window crimsoned both their faces, and I have been making an ass of myself?"

What should he know of the war between love and pride, or the urgent desire to flee from temptation?

As little could Mrs. Baskerville discern the source of Cordelia's restlessness in the weeks to come; the sudden fits of energetic industry when no work came amiss, the hasty flinging aside of sewing, or knotting, or netting, for a dash at the harpsichord that threatened the destruction of the keys, and subsided into music so low and melancholy the good old lady felt herself saddened in listening, or the outdoor reading, or rather the restless pacing of the garden walks with a book, which might have been upside down for all she knew of it.

Rebecca was too much engaged with her own lover to observe much of this. One thing she did note, that Mr. Vill came no more; and beyond a brief remark that Hutton's apprentice had obtained his patent, her uncle ceased to speak of him or of his lock.

Cordelia had noticed this reticence, be sure, and surmising the reason, she rebelled in secret against the negative rebuke. It was not the best way to subdue her own heart. She found herself watching the gates and the open country beyond from the window of her own room, where she spent many solitary but not profitable hours.

Once or twice she caught a glimpse of Vill's tall figure passing the ornamental iron gates on a Sunday, and once with a shorter and stouter companion crossing the heath towards New Hall almost knee-deep in gorse and heather. And as from time to time he looked back over his shoulder she wondered if he was looking out for her, or if he had seen where she stood watching him, and what he would think if he had.

It was customary at that time for ladies to do their own marketing, and Mrs. Baskerville might be seen every Thursday, accompanied by one or other of the girls, and followed by a servant man who carried a couple of huge

open baskets, wending her way towards the shambles in the Bull Ring, to the butter-women under the Old Cross, or to the solitary fishmonger's, for supplies of such comestibles as their own gardens and poultry-yard did not supply. As a rule she avoided the crowded Gateway on a market day, having as little liking to be jostled by the panniers of a pack-horse, upset by a refractory porker, or to brush skirts with a coach or cart wheel, as she had to traverse the narrow raised causeway of the High Town, where the horns of beasts standing for sale in serried rank in the roadway below, threatened damage to flounces or furbelows.

There was a narrow crooked alley running from New Street to the Bull Ring, at the extreme end of the Gateway block of premises. It was not over savoury, but it served Mrs. Baskerville to escape what she regarded as the greater evil. Consequently she did not usually pass the shop of Mr. Hutton, and with the closing of his circulating library the necessity to call there in a manner ceased. The magazines had to be fetched once a month as of old, or it might be a message had to be delivered.

On the first of these occasions—closely following the rosebud incident—Miss Carew had "a headache," and held herself excused.

She regretted her decision almost before Mrs. Baskerville and Rebecca were out of sight, and not all the pride she summoned to confirm her resolution sufficed to overcome her longing to be with them, "if only to show there was nothing more than friendliness in her simple gift."

Mrs. Baskerville and Rebecca duly returned, and laid the magazines upon the table, too much overpowered with the heat of the sun —it was before the advent of parasols—to note the eager expectancy of Cordelia under cover of assumed indifference.

"Where did you go? Whom did you see?" elicited only from the elder, "Oh, no one in particular," from the younger; "no one but Mr. Westley, who is coming here this evening."

But at the dinner table Mrs. Baskerville remarked, "I think Mr. Hutton must be getting on in the world. He hath taken his wife and children to Aston *in a chaise;* and they are not the people to launch out beyond their means. I think it would do that apprentice of his no harm to have a holiday."

"Very likely," replied her husband; "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

"Well, whether he works too much or thinks too much, he seems to be galloping to his grave. His eyes are sinking into his head."

Miss Carew was raising peas on the point of her knife, back they fell on the plate with a rattle, and only with an effort did she keep the knife from falling too. Mrs. Baskerville went on, unobservant of the frown on her husband's brow.

"He said he could not sleep in Mr. Hutton's absence."

"No doubt! No doubt! And so you met Westley. What had he to say?"

Mr. Baskerville's question turned the current of conversation, and left Miss Carew to distract herself with fears and fancies, all her family pride humbled in the dust.

She would have been glad of any pretext to call at the bookseller's, but none presented itself. She was ready at any time to go shopping with Rebecca to mercer's or hosier's or shoemaker's, to exchange books at the library in Colmore Row on the bare chance of meeting Vill and ascertaining for herself if he were really as ill as was said. Coming back disappointed, she would fling her bonnet on her bed exasperated with herself for thus troubling herself about a mere bookseller's apprentice.

September came. Miss Marston was stitching early and late for the wedding in prospective. Miss Carew accompanied Mrs. Baskerville to the Market and to the bookseller's.

The magazines were ready, but there was only an assistant behind the counter.

"Where is Mr. Vill?" asked the old lady.

"In the warehouse, madam, helping master to take stock. Shall I call him?"

"Oh, dear no. I hope he is better."

The man opened his eyes. "He has not been ill, madam."

"Then his looks belied him," said Mrs. Baskerville and marched out. Cordelia had not spoken a word.

October showed his russet face. Again Miss Carew accompanied Mrs. Baskerville. Behind the counter stood the assistant and eight-year old Catherine.

The magazines were not placed in readiness. The assistant, new to the department, explained that Mr. Vill had been ill in bed for a fortnight, and he did not know which they were.

"Ill!" exclaimed both ladies in a breath, Cordelia with a gasp in hers. "Ah," continued the elder, "I was wiser than you, young man. I saw it coming. What ails him?"

"A low fever, madam," answered the assistant, wondering at Mrs. Baskerville's interest in his master's apprentice.

Miss Catherine looking up from the patchwork she was sewing, here put in her word,

"Dr. Ash says he has something on his mind, but when mother opened the press to put his clothes away she found—oh, such a beau-ti-ful little white box he had made with a rosebud on the top, moss and all, as good as if it had come out of a garden; and *she* says he has made himself ill getting up too soon in a morning to carve it, and to make his look before that," and miss nodded her head with quite an air of superior intelligence.

"Hm! So he's been working night and day has he? But you tell your mother, miss, I've a notion the smells from the swine-market and the beast-market are answerable for as much as over-work," was Mrs. Baskerville's retort.

"Oh!" said the tiny dot of a girl opening wide her eyes, "Dr. Ash said that too! How did you know?"

"*I* expected it long ago," said Cordelia in a sort of muffled voice.

"Are you sorry he is ill?" queried the little damsel, gravely.

"Aye, my dear," answered the kindly old lady.

"*Very*," was the low but impressive response of the young one, as the child went on with a sober earnestness,

"*I* am, for I love him, oh, so much, and I do so miss him. I hope he will be well soon."

The hope had its echoes, and the ladies departed with their magazines, much to the satisfaction of the servant waiting outside with the loaded baskets.

Cordelia carried a heavier load away with her. What was the "something on his mind"? Was the rosebud he had carved a copy of the one he had from her? Surely he had not made himself ill in carving *that!* Something on his mind? Surely it could not be hopeless love that was preying upon him! Oh, no, it must be the unwholesomeness of the spot he spent his days and nights in."

The latter was the *only* view she held in discussion with Mrs. Baskerville on the homeward way; the only view the latter took in reporting to her husband the illness of his protégé.

"Umph!" said he. "It's quite time something was done towards cleansing our thoroughfares, and clearing them of cattle. It's hardly safe to drive one's carriage through them. And at night when there's no moon it is absolutely impracticable. I'll have a talk to Dr. Ash and John Taylor about it."

Business connected with the magnificent Bible just issued took him the following day to William Hutton's. There he met Dr. Ash and one or two more, including Matthew Boulton, for though ladies had now their

library and lounge elsewhere, men of ability and science still congregated in the crowded shop of him whose own pen seemed to have forsaken all literature but that of the ledger.

The subject of much needed improvement was mooted and talked over, Dr. Ash (who also suggested the need of a hospital for the sick) and one or two others holding with Mr. Baskerville; William Hutton, who did not care to have a slur cast on the situation of his own premises, pooh-poohing the idea of improvement.

"Nothing ails the atmosphere," said he, "the house is healthy enough. More likely," and he quoted Shakespeare, "the poor youth's in love."

There was a little laughter, the idea of improvement was shelved for a time, and Mr. Baskerville was reminded of his old suspicions

Vill had very nearly been shelved along with the new project, for a week or two more went by before he was able to take his old and active part in the business. He was, however, well cared for, not alone because he was a valuable servant and a favourite, but because kindliness was the law of the household, and Patience in particular had a strong motherly feeling towards him.

There were fragments of fact in all the suppositions respecting the primary cause of Vill's illness. Dr. Ash came nearest to the mark.

Vill was in love, hopelessly in love. He had laboured early and late to perfect his lock, and also to reproduce the white moss rosebud in a form worthy of presentation to Miss Carew, but he had seen nothing of her since the sweet bud passed into his possession. He detected Mr. Baskerville's suspicions in the intimation that he would in future find his patron in the counting-house, and when he saw nothing week after week of the young lady, he had a conviction that his origin had been set before her in all its shameful details. He had told himself that his love was hopeless, but there was a yearning after hope nevertheless. The success of his patent lock became as nothing to him whilst feeling himself disgraced in the sight of the one he worshipped so devotedly. He was under the conviction that she scorned him, and his very integrity made the sense of a dishonoured name sting him more keenly. Over-work and unhappiness thus predisposed him to be influenced by any miasma floating in the atmosphere. And no doubt he owed his recovery as much to Miss Catherine's report that "pretty Miss Carew was *very* sorry he was ill and hoped he would soon be better," as to Dr. Ash's pills and potions. The latter administered to the body's malady, she to the "mind diseased."

CHAPTER VI.

TURNING THE TABLES.

NOVEMBER skies were not propitious to feminine attire, but very few ladies went to market in their best array, and Mrs. Baskerville was too good a housekeeper to do her catering by deputy.

Of course, she preferred a fine day for her marketing, but though she had never so much as seen an umbrella she did not shirk her duty. She simply dressed for the weather and expected her companions to do the same.

With an oilskin hood and cape to protect her bonnet and dark camlet gown, worn well tucked up, and a pair of iron-ringed pattens on her feet to raise her out of the mud, she would trudge on through the rain composedly, and naturally expect her attendants to do likewise. Not that she or they were regardless of the discomfort, but it was one of the necessary adjuncts of the season and had to be borne.

Only long practice could have enabled the patten wearers to pilot their way through the

deep mud of the suburban road, flooded in rainy seasons with the over-flow of a shallow stream; and still greater skill was needed to tread safely the narrow causeways of the streets—roughly paved as they were with small boulder-stones known in recent years as "petrified kidneys"—since pattens, as the writer can testify, had an uncomfortable tendency to twist under the feet to the danger alike of ankles and equilibrium.

Yet it was only when the downpour was excessive and the roads were well-nigh impassable, that the good lady called her husband's grand carriage into requisition, since although theirs was quite a country residence, it was little more than half a mile from the Bull Ring, and the growing town was rapidly approaching Easy Hill.

Seeing this was the case there was nothing unusual in the offer of Miss Carew to attend Mrs. Baskerville on the day when the magazines were due, whilst Rebecca took charge of affairs indoors.

There was little loitering in the open Market Place. Purchases were soon made, and the laden servant dispatched homeward in advance, whilst a call was made for the magazines, Mrs. Baskerville, if the truth were told, being herself desirous to see how the clever and fine young man had borne his

severe attack. Pale he had been and thin to attract her attention in the first instance; paler and thinner he had risen from his bed, and there had not been much time to recruit.

There was no one in the outer shop but himself at the moment they entered, and his back was towards them.

The click of pattens caused him to turn sharply. A sudden flush rose to his temples as they greeted him, but it soon faded.

"Gracious me! you look like a ghost!" exclaimed Mrs. Baskerville, unable to repress her astonishment.

"I am sorry to see——," began Miss Carew, then involuntarily put her mittened hand out over the counter, and before Mrs. Baskerville had recovered her surprise the soft white fingers lay in his trembling clasp; her moist black eyes met his full of pity and sadness.

In another moment she had recovered her hand and her self-possession, but the involuntary action, the broken speech, the eloquent eyes, had told him all he cared to know. She did *not* scorn or despise him!—The knowledge had been cheaply bought by his long suffering.

"I had very nearly become a ghost, madam," he answered cheerfully, "and I cared not to live. But an angelic message

came to me a month ago as I lay on my pallet, and bade me rise—and *now*—I feel the fresh current of life strong within me. Strength and colour will soon return."

He had addressed himself to Mrs. Baskerville, but Cordelia *felt* the interpretation was for her without his addendum, made after a pause.

"I have to thank you, ladies, both, for the honour of some kind inquiries during my illness. Believe me, I shall ever remember your condescension with gratitude."

"We are glad to find you are able to thank us, and behind the counter again, and so will be Mr. Hutton," observed Mrs. Baskerville.

"Aye," remarked Mr. Hutton, coming out of the back shop, "we thought he would have slipped through our fingers a month ago. Then he took an unexpected turn for the better—and here he is—worth half-a-dozen dead men. We could ill have spared him, madam, he hath been like a son to us. If our own sons turn out as well it will be satisfactory."

"That's a good hearing," said Mrs. Baskerville, "but you have made Mr. Vill blush. Well, modesty's a sign of grace. The young men of this generation seem not to have a blush left among them."

"Mr. Hutton overrates my services, ladies. I have had the very best of masters and mis-

tresses, and have merely done my duty. To have done less would have been downright ingratitude."

A blustering individual, greeted as Mr. Roper, entering at that juncture called Mr. Hutton away.

Vill had spoken with earnestness. The warm blood had mounted to his broad forehead, and tingled in his finger-tips. Never had his master's praise been so sweet or so opportune. He was sure no word was lost on Miss Carew although she had listened only.

With a proud uplifting of her head she broke the silence: "Such approbation from such a master is a patent of nobility!"

Then as if conscious she had said too much, she caught at one suggestive word, and turned the conversation into common-place, "Pray, sir, is your patent lock in good demand?"

"Thank you, Miss Carew, it is. So many vagabonds have been let loose from disbanded regiments, and robberies have been so frequent all over the kingdom, that it is impossible to supply them fast enough."

"I am pleased to hear it. The inventor who does a service to the public has a right to reap the benefit. I am afraid my guardian is growing disheartened with the inadequate appreciation of his great work as a printer."

Here Mrs. Baskerville, who had gone to the door to look out, struck in with, "My dear, have you got the magazines? It is no use waiting any longer, the rain doth not abate."

"Here are the magazines, madam; I had better tie them up to keep them dry," said Vill, briskly papering them up. To cut the string he drew from his pocket the silver-hafted knife, then laid it on the counter.

Miss Carew took it up.

"Dear me, that is a singular knife, and it appears to be an old one. Do you know what these letters stand for?"

"Yes, madam, W. H. for William Hutton, who gave the knife to me, and P. W. for Peter Webb, from whom my master received it many years ago."

"It is quite a curios——"

At that moment in came Mr. Baskerville, not in his best mood.

Occupied with the knife and with each other, the stoppage of the carriage had been unheard among the noises of the market, where cattle and vehicles were not unexpected.

"Ah!" cried he, "I thought I should find you here!" and he shut his lips tightly down or he might have said something sharp.

"Why, John! whatever brought you here through the rain?"

"Oh, Guardy, who could have expected

you?" questioned wife and ward simultaneously as the knife was dropped and the magazines taken up.

"The carriage brought me, young lady, though I was not expected, and it will take you back. So hurry in, and don't keep the horses steaming in the rain."

Vill was round the counter in an instant, intending to assist the ladies, but Mr. Baskerville waved him back, saying coldly, whilst there was a shuffling off of pattens, "Keep back, sir. Your services are not required. I am here. My servant waits. You might find the rain prejudicial to your health. Prithee, tell your master I will see him ere the week be out."

Mr. Baskerville's manner was more repelling than his words.

Vill stopped short. The repulse was pointed, and he chafed under it, as the sensitive nostrils indicated.

So chafed Miss Carew. She held her pattens in one hand by the buckled straps, and had gathered up her gown with the other before descending the muddy steps. To do this the parcel had been put down on the counter.

At once she dropped the folds of her dress, and drawn to her full height, for the second time that morning put forth her hand to meet the palm of Vill.

"Pardon me, sir," she said, with marked politeness. "I had forgotten your recent illness. I should be sorry to expose you to a renewal. Good-day, sir."

The proffered hand was taken, clasped, released. She again gathered up her skirts, and in quite another tone said, "Pray, Guardy, bring the magazines, since Mr. Vill must not attend us in the rain."

Mr. Baskerville looked black. "Here, Pat," cried Vill to the lad, "carry this parcel and the ladies' pattens to the carriage." And so he bowed them out, all in a thrill with the touch of that small soft hand; all admiration of her palpable protest against Mr. Baskerville's rudeness, and perplexed by the sudden change in his patron's manner.

No sooner had the carriage turned the corner, and emerged from the darksome gateway into the light of New Street than Mr. Baskerville began,

"Do you think, Miss Carew, it befits your father's daughter to exchange courtesies and clasp hands with a mere parish apprentice, as if he were your equal?"

"When Mr. Baskerville introduces 'a modest young inventor' to his wife, his niece, his ward, at his own table, the ladies may surely be excused if they treat as an equal the person so received as an equal."

Mr. Baskerville's painted snuff-box was in demand. Mrs. Baskerville sat silent.

"There is a wide difference between patronage and familiarity, Miss Carew."

"Assuredly, as wide as between courtesy and familiarity. It was my father's teaching, that neither gentleman nor gentlewoman could allow an inferior to exceed in politeness."

There was another and more prolonged raid on the snuff-box. A lurch of the carriage into a rut shook out a portion of the contents over the velvet breeches, and furnished an excuse for an expletive more strong than polite.

"Demme, miss, am I to be schooled in politeness by my own ward? Was whispering over a counter or hand-shaking needed for courtesy?"

"No, sir, I offered *my* hand to cover your *dis*courtesy," she said haughtily; "my father's daughter requires no schooling in propriety. And I think, sir, had you heard Mr. Hutton's encomium of his—apprentice—you would not have so readily forgotten your own favourite quotation from Mr. Pope,

> 'Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow,
> And all the rest's but leather and prunella.'

Pardon me if I follow your lead in estimating a man by his worth rather than by his pedigree. I have heard you say that 'the man who rose from the dust to do his duty deserved a

higher pedestal than the prince who left his duty undone.' I respect and admire Mr. Vill, sir, but I shall not forget what is due to my father's memory, or to myself. We will close the subject, sir."

"Your audacity has struck me dumb," he said, adding to his wife, "Sarah, you will have to keep your eye on this high-spirited young madam, who is not ashamed to avow her admiration of—a 'prentice lad—a nobody."

"He may be somebody some day," was the quick retort. And the black eyes were full of fire.

Further conversation was cut short. The carriage had stopped at the foot of the double steps, and the footman held open the door.

Had Mr. Baskerville desired to elevate Vill into a hero, and excite the admiration he was desirous to prevent, he could not have done so more effectually.

Cordelia Carew was of a nature to rise up in defence of the absent, and to oppose opposition. She had turned Mr. Baskerville's weapons against himself, and even her last shot he took as a bullet aimed against his own breast. In finding arguments to defend her own conduct she had been roused to estimate and defend the absent Vill, and had there been no prepossession in his favour already, it might have been created.

She certainly contrasted him with Mr. Marston, much to the disadvantage of the latter, who found her cold, distant, impenetrable, haughty.

There was no more market-going with Mrs. Baskerville; the distinguished printer took care of that. The carriage was at the good lady's disposal every Thursday, but either Miss Rebecca or himself went as her companion, market-baskets filling up the vacant space. Mr. Baskerville himself laid down the law that "before Rebecca could be fit to marry, she must learn to market."

"And what about myself?" asked Cordelia.

"The same necessity does not exist for Miss Carew of Carew Mount," was the answer. Indeed so frequently was she reminded of her position and inheritance that at last she was tempted to exclaim, "A fig for Carew Mount, if it is to keep me a prisoner here all the winter!"

She really was little better than a prisoner, for although there were balls and parties about Christmas time to which they were invited, there was but a step from house to carriage.

And though the younger ladies were permitted to improve their dancing under the tuition of a certain Signor Giorgi, then staying in the town, there was no joining a public class. The signor came and went in a sedan chair,

and the minuets were practised in the drawing-room.

Mr. Baskerville was no doubt straining his prerogative, but he had some show of reason. If the previous winter had been bad, the present was far worse. Floods, and frost, and snow, and floods again, made roads in town and country almost impassable. Carriers advertised their inability to convey heavy loads, or to perform their journeys at all. Mails were delayed or went astray, post-boys were lost in drifts, or leaving their beasts to perish, made their way on foot with the bags; in one case the bags were found hung on a post, the two men in charge lying dead in the snow. It was not a winter for ladies to go abroad on foot where there was water to be forded, and Mr. Baskerville was chary of his cream-coloured horses.

At all events they were not for Miss Carew's use that winter.

She rebelled openly, and insisted on having a horse of her own to ride. But the guardian was the keeper of the purse, and no horse was bought.

Heavy floods followed the last snow, and there were complaints of disaster all over the country.

But no sooner had the water subsided, and the daffodils donned their yellow petticoats,

than Mr. Baskerville announced an invitation for Miss Carew from Madam West.

This time there was no eagerness displayed, the young lady demurred on the plea that her wardrobe required renewing, and Mrs. Baskerville innocently enough concurred.

"Bah!" said her husband peevishly. "Madam West has no sons to be captivated with 'purple and fine linen.' But there," and he handed his wife a bank-note, "take Cordelia to a mercer's and buy all she requires, and be quick about it. And, Sarah, see she goes nowhere else."

Satins, taffeta, chintz, brocade, lawn, lace, were inspected and selected; there was a visit to the shoemaker's, to Allen's for a straw hat and haberdashery, and there the young lady, to her chaperon's great surprise, made a purchase of a fair-haired English doll with blue glass eyes and very rosy cheeks. She desired that it might be wrapped up separately.

"And now," said she, "as I shall not have time to dress it, I shall take it with me to little Catherine Hutton; I require some stationery."

It was in vain Mrs. Baskerville expostulated. Miss Carew had a determined will of her own.

"I am Mr. Baskerville's ward, madam, not his prisoner, though I have been something like it during the winter. But I have deter-

mined, if there be any more coercion, to appeal to the Lord Chancellor to shorten my minority."

So saying, she walked out of the shop, leaving Mrs. Baskerville to follow, or not, as she thought proper.

CHAPTER VII.

PRESENTED.

If Miss Carew had expected to see Mr. Vill (so he styled himself in his dislike to his supposed patronymic) she must have been disappointed, for only Mrs. Hutton stood behind the counter.

Mrs. Baskerville, pleased to see her, shook hands with an expression of her pleasure and surprise, to which Mrs. Hutton replied,

"No, I am not often here now. But thee sees, Tuesday is always a slack day, so William gave Vill liberty to go with Jack Cotterwell about a workshop the two think of taking in Edgbaston Street. Thee sees the little smithy in Digbeth is too small for the old man and his son both, now there is such a demand for the improved locks and bolts, and as Vill will be out of his time this summer the two are for going fairly into partnership. William saith they are certain to succeed if their small capital sufficeth. Indeed he hath offered to advance a small sum to fit up the new premises for the steady and thrifty young men."

"Very generous of Mr. Hutton," said Mrs. Baskerville.

"Nay, he seeth his money will be safe, and Vill hath been a truly faithful servant unto us. We could not honestly let him go emptyhanded, seeing that he hath saved us so much."

"Your sentiments do you honour, madam. I do not doubt Mr. Vill will prove himself worthy your esteem," observed Miss Carew; then went on to say, "I require a small matter of stationery, letter-paper, sealing wax, quills, and ink; sufficient to serve me during several weeks' stay in the country."

Before these could be looked out she laid her long narrow parcel on the table, and said, "I have brought a doll for Miss Catherine, and some blue silk for the doll's frock. You will please to tell your good little girl I meant to bring her one as a Christmas-box, but—but—I was not at liberty to leave the house to obtain it."

Just then in came Miss Catherine and her brother Tom with book bag and slates, fresh from school.

The flaxen-haired doll was handed to her with a repetition of the message previously left with the mother, only this time was added with a smile, "and you understand, Miss Kitty, big girls must do as their elders bid them just as little girls must."

The quick-witted child listened with demure politeness, taking in every word (as most likely Miss Carew intended) before opening the parcel to admire and hug the wooden baby.

"You will kiss me for it?"

"Oh, yes, and thank you," and the little girl, whose mother very rarely kissed her children, put her arms shyly round Cordelia's neck to be herself kissed very warmly.

"Come, come, Cordelia, we shall be late for tea," cried Mrs. Baskerville. "See, you have dropped one of the parcels from your muff."

Straightway Mrs. Hutton, whose quiet thanks had been already spoken, volunteered to send the young lady's sundry parcels home for her, along with the rather ungainly package of stationery.

"It is not necessary," was on the tip of Cordelia's tongue, when some inner prompting caused her to substitute an acceptance of the offer.

Then the two ladies, whose hoops somewhat crowded the confined space, made the best of their way home.

The mercery goods followed them that evening; the numerous etceteras, stationery included, all under one cover, did not arrive until the morrow. The parcel was addressed to "Miss Carew," and the servant to whom it

was delivered carried it straightway to the young lady in her own room.

It appeared more bulky than she had anticipated, but she did not open it immediately.

When she did she discovered one neatly papered oblong package, of which she had no remembrance. It was not the stationery, and was separately addressed to her, in the same handwriting as the superscription on the outer wrap.

What could it be? It was scarcely heavy enough for a volume of the size, yet it had square corners like a book, and something else seemed laid upon it. She turned it over and over in perplexity for some moments before she broke the seals.

Then she stood mute with astonishment as she uncovered a dainty trinket-box of white-holly, with a delicately carved moss rosebud lying on the top as if dropped by the artist-hand upon it.

What a revelation it was to her. How the hot blood of passionate shame surged upwards to her brow, and then receding left her whiter than the rose-bud!

Was it for her the hours of sleep had been given to produce such loveliness? There was no need to tell her whence it came.

She was still gazing on the unopened box when Rebecca's step and voice were heard.

The precious treasure was hastily thrust out of sight, and when Miss Marston entered to announce the mantua-maker's arrival, Cordelia Carew was busied with the numerous articles scattered over her counterpane.

At least a couple of hours had been spent with the mantua-maker in measurements and instructions before Cordelia was free to return to her room.

Examination revealed to her a small silver key wrapped in thin paper, and lying perdue under one of the raised leaves.

It was not the velvet lining of the box that caught her eye, but a neatly-folded well-sealed letter. Goodness! how the hands of the proud beauty shook and trembled, and how her colour went and came as she opened the paper and read,

"Madam,

"Pray pardon my presumption in thus addressing you.

"It was my good fortune on a sunny day that will ever live in my memory to become the possessor, by your favour, of a fair white rosebud, which seemed to me a sweet type of the incomparable gatherer.

"You were pleased to suggest that the lovely flower would fade. On that inspiriting I endeavoured to catch the fleeting outlines of the opening bud in material less perishable,

so as to preserve a lasting memorial, which I was so hardy as to hope might find acceptance from the gracious giver of the original.

"That original I shall preserve whilst I have life, for although its beauty hath fled, its fragrance remains and seems to breathe of other inestimable virtues equally imperishable. For a time I drew from its perfume a breath of hope, for I had rashly dared to lift my aspirations very high, but as the petals faded one by one, so died my hopes, chilled by reflection. And now I cherish only a dead flower — and a sweet memory. I know, madam, it is not for the humble apprentice to avow his mad passion to one so far above him as Miss Carew. But since I fear that Mr. Baskerville hath penetrated my secret, and desires to check my presumption by removing the treasure he guards to a safer distance (as a little bird hath whispered to me), I am driven to assure him, and yourself, madam, that no impertinent intrusion on your peace or privacy need be feared from me. Were I other than I am no guardian should deter me from placing my fate in your gracious hands, but being *what* I am, conscious of the insurmountable barrier of my birth, I shrink from even the suspicion of annoyance or importunity.

"Yet, madam, I have ventured to send my humble handiwork with this. If you deign to

accept the tribute, you will at least remove my dread lest I should by word or look have incurred your own displeasure. That indeed would be a grievous trouble to

"Your devoted slave until death,

"VILL."

Could Mr. Baskerville have seen the eagerness with which this billet was devoured, the tears and kisses showered upon the senseless paper, what would he have said or done?

He saw only a voiceless elation in his ward's bearing, a warmer glow on her cheeks, a brighter sparkle in her eyes, and set all down to a woman's pleasure in shopping and contemplating silks and satins for her own adornment. He had taken care to assure himself no Mr. Vill had been seen.

Where was Miss Carew's pride? Over and over again she asked herself that question when the first excitement of Vill's singular avowal and renunciation had subsided. She could not answer her own query. She could only tell herself that she was loved, and that whatever Vill's birth, no man more worthy a true woman's love had crossed her path before. Accept his gift, aye, and treasure it. She knew then why her parcels had not come the previous evening. She could see how that letter had been penned in the midnight when others slept, just as the carved rosebud had

been shaped, and both alike for *her*. She owed something to her ancestors, but more unto herself. She had only to wait to see the writer of that noble letter rise out of his apprenticeship into a higher sphere. No hand or word of hers should daunt him at the outset. But the letter called for an answer if she meant to retain his offering, and how should she answer so as neither to seem over-bold or over-proud?

She took the night to deliberate, but morning found her still perplexed, still undecided. She was equally afraid to wound his feelings, or to encourage him too openly. More than one attempt had been set aside before she could pen with a firm hand the following:

"Baskerville House.

"Sir,—I am at a loss how to thank you adequately for the honour you have done my poor flower and me. Whilst I am away in Nottinghamshire, with my father's friend at West Hall, the fadeless copy will serve to remind me of one whose genius is only equalled by his modesty and delicacy.

"Mrs. Hutton spoke of your new enterprise. That it may lead to success and prosperity is the desire of

"Your well-wisher,

"Cordelia Carew.

"To Mr. Vill, at Mr. Hutton's, in the Gateway."

To Phœbe, her own maid, a simple-minded faithful creature who had come with her from Carew Mount, this letter was intrusted for committal to the post office. The maid herself was no scholar and could not read.

"I hate secrecy," was Cordelia's excuse to herself, "but it is needless to provoke my guardian to greater antagonism, or he might do Mr. Vill and his partner some disfavour."

Miss Carew was busied with preparations for her journey, plying an industrious needle, and thinking all the while of her letter and of Vill's aspect when it was delivered to him, but she never for a moment reflected what a revelation it might be.

Vill's patent had brought him letters through the post; one more attracted no attention. He was serving a customer when it was delivered, so without examination it went into his pocket to be read at leisure.

"Goodness!" How the superscription seemed to fascinate his sight as he gazed upon it when the leisure came, and fancied he recognized the writing. He tore the letter open, and read with varying emotions, gladness uppermost. But not until business was over for the day had he a chance to retire to his own room and extract all the sweetness it held for him.

Then he unlocked his own box and drew

thence the safely guarded pistol in its original paper cover.

He held the two superscriptions together. There could be no two opinions. They were written by the same hand. The disguise of the former was so slight as to be transparent. His heart gave a great bound at the discovery; but not for a second moment did he forget that the son of Francis Field was not at liberty to take advantage of his knowledge. Whatever fortune might do for him in the future, however generous Miss Carew might be, he could not be the scoundrel to sully her purity with an alliance to his disgraced name. The pain of this conviction was not the less maddening because he kept the agony shut up in his own breast.

Mr. Baskerville hesitated whether to risk his horses and carriage on a long rough journey, or to hire a chaise. Finally, his love of display prevailed; and about ten days later the gorgeous pictorial carriage, with post-horses and postillion from the "Swan," stood in front of Baskerville House, with his own liveried coachman on the box seat.

Miss Carew was handed in with formal politeness, Phœbe scrambled in, and after seeing the luggage safely strapped behind, Mr. Baskerville followed.

The footman pushed back the sliding step

under the vehicle, the post-boy smacked his whip, and they were off, Mrs. Baskerville, Rebecca, and Mr. Marston waving their handkerchiefs from the broad flat uppermost step so long as a 'kerchief could be seen waving in return from the chaise window.

As the carriage passed under the flat-roofed Gateway, and the pair of horses made a sharp turn northward into the High Town for Bull Street, Mr. Baskerville's brow contracted, and his lips tightened.

There stood Mr. Vill on the high and narrow causeway with a letter in his hand, with which he made a sign for the postillions to draw up.

Taking off his hat to bow to the lady and gentleman, whilst his refined face was all in a glow, he presented the bulky letter to the latter with the compliments of Mr. Hutton, who would be extremely obliged by Mr. Baskerville's conveyance of it to his sister in Nottingham.

There was a peevish assent, a curt "Good-day, sir," in reply to Vill's expressed hope for their "safe and pleasant journey," an inclination of the head and a sweet "Thank you, sir," from the lady as the carriage started again with a sudden jerk. But in that brief moment, whilst Vill stood there bareheaded, eyes had spoken to eyes, and he gazed after them in a dazed but blissful stupor.

Out of Bull Street, through the Minories and the stately Old Square, where the trees had barely begun to bud, into Litchfield Street, along the Litchfield Road, aye, and beyond Aston's noble park and hall, before Mr. Baskerville opened his lips again. And then it was only for the exclamation, "Why doth he trouble me with his letters?"

This did not distress Cordelia; she had sunk into a reverie, and was well content with the silence which left her undisturbed.

With every mile that increased the distance from Birmingham her guardian's good humour returned, and when they stopped to change horses and take refreshment at the Litchfield posting house he had regained his serenity.

The next stoppage and change was at Burton, the next Derby, the wearisome day's journey ending at the "Crown" Inn, in the Long Row, Nottingham, which they entered when the long vista of thick globular oil lamps were alight, to afford them all a new sensation.

To them the illumination was wonderful, although those who, like the writer, can contrast the old oil lamps, set on wooden posts, with gas and electric lighting, will know them for very poor affairs indeed.

Excessive weariness and a desire for solitude

made a night's rest very desirable to Miss Carew. She was glad when the heavy supper was over and the obliging hostess herself lighted her to a chamber where stood a thickly curtained four-post bedstead, piled with feather beds one upon another, until bed-steps were absolutely necessary. A small room communicating was allotted to Phœbe, who vowed she was "jolted to bits."

In the morning our travellers were assured that such was the condition of the Mansfield Road that another pair of horses at the very least, and a postillion who knew the road and its dangers, would be requisite if they hoped to reach Oxton or West Hall in safety.

The host remarked, "There hath been some talk of petitioning Parliament for an Act to make a good turnpike road through the forest, sir, so many accidents have occurred, and so many people have gone astray to their loss and damage; but I suppose until some of the quality are killed it will end in talk."

"Humph! this is not the only place where projects for improvement end in talk. You have lighted your streets *here*. You may have your road made by and by," quoth Mr. Baskerville, adding, "you may bring out your horses."

Four horses for show would have suited the flourishing printer well, but four horses

to pull his carriage out of deep holes and quagmires was quite another thing, and the extra hint to look to the priming of his pistols was anything but reassuring.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH MADAM WEST.

The marvellous carriage standing in front of the ancient "Crown" Inn (twice honoured by the presence of Royalty), attracted a crowd of gazers, as it had done at every stopping place along their route. This gratified Mr. Baskerville, who seated himself beside his ward, and bowed to the smiling host at parting with much complacence. As they dashed out of the Market Place, and people on the footpaths stood still to watch them pass, he took out his painted snuff-box, deliberately and as gracefully as the swaying motion of the vehicle would permit, in its ascent of Sherwood Street, tittilated his nostrils with his favourite mixture, then flicked away the few grains of fallen powder from his ruffled shirt-front, well satisfied to have excited wonder.

His satisfaction died out when they had left the summit of the hill behind and had to cross Thorneywood Moor on the common track known as the Mansfield Road, and he

began ere long to wish he had been content with a hired chaise.

"Road! call this thing a road!" he grumbled as the carriage plunged down, then up, pitched them forward, then back, and testified its own strength by holding together. "I wish the old Romans had made a road through this forest. Their Icknield Road between Litchfield and Burton is worthy its name and its makers. Bah! Everybody's business is nobody's business. I only regret I did not leave my beautiful carriage at home."

More jolting and shaking, now over the gorse grown waste, anon under the darksome shade of firs, or under the overarching boughs of giant oaks and elms full of the wine of spring, and tipped on every spray with tiny promise of green leaves to be, whilst underneath, the wind blown anemone and the early blue hyacinth disputed the ground with the wood sorrel, the cyclamen and the starry primrose, and the air was odorous of sweet violets. The rumbling wheels drowned the twittering of birds, and the brimstone butterflies fluttered unheeded around as the wheels sank in the old ruts left by the carrier's waggon, and now, once more, rolled smoothly over a patch of fresh vendure.

"Ah, this is better," cried he, straightening himself.

Barely had he spoken when the carriage gave another lurch. One wheel sank up to the nave in a deep hole and in the effort to tug it out one of the traces broke.

The carriage bade fair to topple over. Phœbe shrieked aloud. Miss Carew bade her be silent. She, herself, though taking the journey against her inclination, had neither complained nor grumbled. "People who travel," she said, "must expect those inconveniences."

Indeed it was a very common accident. Coachman and postillion dismounted and set about repairing the damage from a store of odds and ends carried in view of such contingencies.

After a sharp expletive or two, Mr. Baskervilles hut his lips tightly down over his irritation, and sought solace in his snuff-box.

The coachman came up to him. "Would you mind getting out, master, and helping us up with the wheel, there are some queer-looking fellows lurking about in the underwood, and it's best we get off as fast as we can."

"Humph! If I must, I must," said he, getting out with no good-will. He had a tender regard for his garments, and though the ground was dry, the wheels were thick with dust.

The feat was at length accomplished, and

into his carriage got the gentleman again after some personal shaking and dusting, unaware how near the rough-looking fellows had approached, or that Miss Carew had taken a silver-mounted pistol from a basket, and held it presented, so as to show she knew how to use it, and that they did not travel unarmed. The men scowled and with muttered curses drew back into their covert. If they had meditated attack, it was not against armed odds.

The pistol was still in her hand when Mr. Baskerville resumed his place.

"Ha! Where did you get that?" he asked. "Pistols are not playthings for girls."

"They are not playthings for any one, sir. This was my father's. He taught me how to use it, or to fire a gun, only the year before he died. At all events the plaything has served to keep those evil-looking men at bay, though it is but loaded with powder. A flash is as good as a bullet to scare a coward, and crime and cowardice are twins."

"Humph, I think I have seen the trinket before, or one vastly like it," said he, as he took it in his hand. Then looking her full in the face, now crimson to the temples, "In my opinion you are not quitting Birmingham a day too soon, Miss Carew," he added in caustic tones.

"That is your opinion, sir," she answered stiffly. "It may be both too soon and too late."

He saw he was understood, but the presence of Phœbe prohibited more open speech.

After more shaking and jolting and one or two more slight mischances, they passed through Oxton and reached West Hall about mid-day, riding under a long avenue of budding trees to the great wooden gates, which stood open to receive them.

West Hall was an irregular building of many angles and gables, a fine old specimen of beam and plaster architecture, built on a stone foundation. The main entrance lay back in a nook opposite the gates, though not in the middle of the building, and had an ascent of four broad, low stone steps.

The nail-studded door, like the gates, stood hospitably open, and when the carriage stopped Madam West, a woman over forty years of age, whose dark unpowdered hair showed silver threads, and of noble presence, stood there on the topmost step to give them a cordial welcome.

She was habited in a rich black velvet robe worn over the conventional hoop, with a deeply-pointed stomacher and a lengthy train. Her tall cap and elbow ruffles of broad hemmed lawn bespoke mourning not yet laid aside, but scarcely more palpably than the sad curve of

her lips, or the faded light of eyes which in Cordelia's memory had been of deepest grey.

A graceful courtesey, and the words "Welcome to West Hall" was her first salutation. Mr. Baskerville and Cordelia bowed from the carriage in acknowledgment.

The gentleman alighted after a mere "Your servant madam," to the widow, handed out his ward, and led her up the steps, leaving Phœbe and carriage to the care of domestics.

"My dear motherless girl, let me give you cordial welcome to a widowed and childless heart, as well as to West Hall," said Madam West, folding Cordelia in a close embrace. "You have grown into a woman since I saw you last."

"Aye, madam, and I have lost a father since that time," was answered.

Then to Mr. Baskerville she extended a delicate white hand, which he bent over with the formal gallantry of the period.

"Nuttal," said the lady with dignified politeness, addressing a respectful servant in waiting, "attend Mr. Baskerville to his room. I, myself, will accompany my young friend." She turned to the gentleman, "Dinner, sir, will be on the table at one o'clock."

Wide and square was the hall in which they had been received. The floor was white, laid with local gypsum. The walls were panelled

with dark oak that had grown upon the land, and was hung with trophies alike of war and chase; antlers, horns, and hunting spears, bows and arrows, arquebus and musket, sword and shield, with suits of armour in stray corners where Mr. Baskerville would have placed statues. The staircase they ascended was of noble proportions, with a massive balustrade of carved oak; and here and there projecting from the wall were half-closed hands of wrought iron, once designed to grasp flambeaux.

The room allotted to Miss Carew was of moderate dimensions, and still hung with tapestry from ancient looms representing the forest life of Robin Hood and his merry men; chairs, tables, cabinets, were all of oak and massive, but the drapery of bed and windows, the cushions of chairs and window-seats were of yellow damask, and brightened up what else might have been sombre.

"You have grown very beautiful, my dear Cordelia, almost as beautiful as your mother. It would be a pity were you to throw yourself away."

So said Madam West, when, with her own hands she had removed the young lady's travelling hood and flat hat, and holding her by the shoulders gazed with admiration on her countenance.

"I shall not throw myself away, dear madam," replied Cordelia with sufficient dignity; "but there are higher qualities than beauty, for which it would be a poor exchange."

To herself she said: "So I have come here to be tutored and schooled to Mr. Baskerville's views. Mrs. West has evidently had her instructions. I must ascertain what she has been told."

She must have appeared dispirited and fatigued, for almost immediately her kind hostess turned to go, after lifting the tapestry which covered a door and saying,

"Your maid will sleep in this small adjoining room, I will send her to you. Should you require anything not provided pray ring this bell, and if possible the want shall be supplied. But we, secluded country people, must lack many luxuries common in great towns."

"I thank you, dear madam, for your attention to my comfort, but nothing seems lacking here," and she glanced around, but in her secret heart lurked the feeling of a want not so easily to be supplied.

Dinner was a heavy meal in every sense of the word. The profusion on the board could not atone for the weight of the conversation, or the sombre hue of the surroundings. Not only the hostess but Mr. Bulwell, the only

other guest, was in mourning, he for his dead father, of whom, barring a frilled shirt-front, he seemed a living counterpart, as the old lawyer was when William Hutton sold to him the magazines of Peter Webb.

The servants in attendance too wore black, a single stripe of yellow on their sleeves serving for livery. All this, when black was the exception, became conspicuous and chilling.

Much of the conversation turned on a pending law-suit, and sighing laments were breathed alike for the lost husband and the lost heir, to which Cordelia listened for politeness sake, with her own thoughts far astray.

On the morrow Mr. Baskerville departed, after a long and private interview with Madam West on the subject of his ward's unfortunate predilection for a common apprentice of the lowest rank. Something of this he had intimated by letter to the lady, as a reason for his desire to remove Miss Carew to safer and more distant guardianship than his own.

As his carriage was drawn up close to the stone steps, the postillion, a wiry little man about fifty years old, touched his cap, and said, "Sir, I hopes yow keeps yowr pistols i' good fettle. Them men as warr lurking about when th' off wheel stuck fast warr noan good. I'd tak my davy th' one warr long-legged

Field, an' if t' other warr na Ben Harris, whose feyther warr hanged, 't warr his ghoast."

Madam West on the uppermost step overheard, and clasped her hands as if in alarm.

"Alack! if those men be about it behoves us all to be careful. Their presence ever bodes mischief."

"No fear, madam, I am a good shot, and have a steady hand. Besides, my coachman carries a blunderbuss, and is not afraid to use it. We are in less danger from plunderers than from the damnable road. Good-bye, Cordelia, and may the air of the forest restore you to—*health*. Madam West, I kiss your hand. Farewell."

Contrary to vaticinations they reached Nottingham unmolested. The remainder of the day Mr. Baskerville devoted to business in the town, with booksellers and hardware dealers both, the seats of his carriage serving as receptacles for samples; no manufacturer then being too grand to do his own travelling for orders or sales. The same process was repeated at Derby, Burton, Litchfield, so that by the time he alighted at Baskerville House he had turned his few days' excursion to profit.

For a high-spirited town girl accustomed to sociable intercourse and lively companionship West Hall in its then condition must have

been most dispiriting. But all the early years of her life Miss Carew had been the denizen of a lonely country house, the companion of a widowed father. And she was not one to brood over misfortunes, or lament disconsolately so as to make all around miserable with her own melancholy.

"I wish I had your rare fund of spirits," said Madam West a few days after her arrival; "but my life has been marked with losses that have made me sad."

"Oh, I have my 'doleful dumps' sometimes; but I shake them off, and, like the brave old knight in 'Chevy Chase,' I feel that 'If my legs were cut away, I'd fight upon the stumps.' Melancholy is not for me, madam. It eats into the heart like a canker if encouraged. I was wont to mount my pony and canter over the field with a great deer-hound scampering after me; and now that pony and hound are gone, I dash off my dolefuls on my harpsichord, and so make myself fit for my own society and that of others. For better remedy I bide God's good time."

"You are a brave girl. I would I more resembled you. Even now I feel your vivacity contagious."

"You had better try my receipt, madam. What say you now to a gallop, or to a brisk

walk through the village, just to keep the blood from curdling?"

Madam West looked grave. "I have never mounted a saddle since—ah, well, no matter. I must not sadden you with my sorrows. We will walk. I will place a horse and servant at your disposal if you prefer to ride."

"Nay, madam, a walk this breezy day will be exhilarating, and blow the cobwebs off."

With a sigh the lady assented, and the walk was taken, not merely over the grounds, but beyond the gates and down the avenue, through the village, but even then madam's steps turned towards the little old church, and to a flat tomb under the great yew tree, where on the stone a new name had been sharply incised.

Here her tears fell fast, but Cordelia drew her away, and by dint of questions concerning this or that called her mind to brighter thoughts. By-and-by the village was left behind, they had strayed from what path there was and stood by the side of a rapid little stream, the same Dover Beck through which the Baskerville carriage had splashed some half-mile farther south.

"It was here," said Madam West, "our little darling's velvet cap was found. How

he had strayed so far we could never divine, but the bank was broken at the edge, and he must have been carried away by the stream."

"Alas! was your son drowned?"

"Aye, so we concluded, though we never found another trace of him."

"But surely this stream would not have carried his body out of reach?"

"It was winter, my dear, a wet, dreary winter, the Beck was full and swollen, the Trent to which it runs was like a turbulent sea. We had not even the poor consolation of kissing his dead lips or laying him to rest in consecrated ground."

"Whom God buries are well buried, madam. Neither Moses nor Elijah had a tomb. But why did you give up hope? You had no assurance that your child *was* drowned."

"We had no assurance of his death, and for a weary while we fancied his grandfather had caused him to be spirited away."

"His grandfather? And wherefore?" asked Cordelia in astonishment.

"Ah, that is a sad, sad story."

"Then do not tell it, or at least not here," was answered promptly. "But let me entreat you to leave this spot. You indulge too much in melancholy recollections. Our lives

and our loves are in God's own hand. He will make all things plain in his own good time."

"My dear Cordelia," said the weeping lady as she suffered herself to be borne away. "You would charm Afflictions self of her tears. I need only say as some excuse for mine that my father, for some cause unknown to me, fled from his home when I was ten years old, and never did we see his face again. Mr. Bulwell, who managed his estate and handed the bulk of the proceeds over to my mother under instructions, held some clue, but at his death even that was lost. So was the will my father was known to make. In succession I have lost father, mother, son and husband. I stand alone in the world. Can you wonder at my sadness?"

"You are at least mistress of your own actions, Madam West. I, too, stand alone in the world, and in bondage to my father's will. But I am young, my chains will fall—and then——!"

"You would bind yourself in stronger fetters. But pause, Cordelia, ere you take a step you might repent. You have a family name to uphold."

"I will never disgrace my name, madam; nor change it save for one as worthy. But I do not mistake wealth for worth."

"Ah! my love, so young girls think. I would I had a son to woo you for himself. I should be proud of such a daughter."

"And I, madam, could render you the homage of a child to a mother. Let me fill a daughter's place in your heart, and chase away the ghosts that haunt it."

She laid her hand in Madam West's and raised it to her lips. It sealed a compact never broken.

CHAPTER IX.

A RELIC.

The presence of Cordelia Carew shed light upon the dark places of West Hall.

Slowly as the unfolding of a flower under the influence of the sun, did the face of the mistress of the mansion brighten and break into smiles. The smiles did not linger, but still they came.

The servants went about their daily duties with freer steps. No man or maid seemed afraid to speak above a whisper to another. The shadow that had been as a spider's web around a fly seemed blown away.

The April sunshine brought in through open casements the breath of flowers, the song of birds; but the sunbeams that fell on the sad heart of the widow were those of human sympathy and youthful enthusiasm.

Once more she began to take pleasure in her old pursuits. She paced the quaint garden walks with lighter step and an observant, not an apathetic, eye. The old gardener rejoiced and kept his underlings well to their

work now some one took an interest in their doings.

Indoors the men-servants were allowed to resume their light liveries, the maids their ordinary apparel. Madam West herself slightly, very slightly, modified her heavy mourning, substituting lace for the broad-hemmed lawn.

Slight were the changes, but they had permanent effect. Cheerfulness prevailed where all had been gloomy and lugubrious.

And for it all they were indebted to the influence of a high-spirited girl who, with unflinching fortitude, kept her own heartaches resolutely down, determined to span the dark tide of the present with the rainbow bridge of hope.

Whatever were her "doleful dumps" she kept them resolutely to herself. Even in the solitude of her tapestried chamber she fought against despondency.

She had quite made up her mind that Vill was a man to be esteemed and loved, was the man she loved, she had conclusively settled that she would marry no one else. But she had not so certainly made up her mind that he was the man she ought to marry, even if he asked her, of which there appeared no prospect, the pride of his humility being as strong as her pride of birth and position.

She had told herself that some day he would achieve a higher position for himself by dint of his own ability. But those were not the days of "levelling up," men "risen from the ranks" did not compete with the aristocracy, there were no wealthy manufacturers bidding in the market for the mansions and estates of bankrupt nobility. Patrician and plebeian were the two poles of society, as wide apart.

The descent she had made in loving one so very far beneath her was not to be overlooked. No Byron had then been born to write,

> "Why did she love him? Curious fool, be still!
> Is human love the growth of human will?"

Yet had a like sentiment strong possession of her soul.

Over and over again she had told herself that they were both young, that he had character and capabilities to raise him nearer to her with every year. And she would *not* despond. There was no knowing what those years might bring.

I do not mean to imply that she thought all this as here set down, but something parallel.

And whilst sitting silent by Mr. Baskerville's side in the carriage that was bearing her so far away from him she loved, she had been

revolving in her active brain a project for helping Vill to rise.

She was no nearer a solution at her journey's end, for whatever was done must neither compromise herself nor him.

The presence of Mr. Bulwell at the dreary dinner-table was suggestive. She soon discovered that he was a frequent visitor at West Hall.

Ere long she found an opportunity to speak with him in private as he was quitting the hall.

"Sir," said she, accosting him, "I have a little confidential business I wish you to transact for me. I presume you would respect my secret."

He placed his hand on his ruffled shirt-front and bowed low. "A lawyer's breast is the grave of secrets, madam."

There was a brief conversation, a memorandum in a pocket-book, a bank-note and some gold changed hands. There was a bow, a courtesy, and the business was to all intents and purposes done.

There had been few visitors at the Hall since the death of its master. Madam West's melancholy had not been inviting to neighbours who must cross an almost trackless common, set here and there with darksome yews and juniper, or an equally dreary forest;

the picturesque having few charms for indwellers who felt only its attendant discomforts.

In its very grandeur was loneliness.

It was one of the last places to which a wise man would have sent a romantic girl to cure her of a love fever had she been at all inclined to brood.

However, it was speedily buzzed about that a lovely young lady had been brought in a wonderful carriage to stay at West Hall, and, singly or in groups, the neighbouring gentry dropped in to "pay their respects to Madam West," and criticize her visitor.

Invitations came for madam and her young friend, and for the sake of that young friend they were accepted. The disused black and yellow carriage was brought into daylight, visits were ceremoniously returned, and more than one young squire fell hopelessly in love with the beautiful heiress. But neither their homage nor their estates had any special attraction for Miss Carew. She found the Squirearchy of Sherwood pretty much what she had known of the Squirearchy of Worcestershire, and her residence under Mr. Baskerville's roof, where men of many minds and ideas were wont to congregate, had spoiled her for their society.

Still it had brought Madam West out of her seclusion, and kept Cordelia's blood in motion.

Before the last hawthorn blossoms had whitened the ground with their scented snow, the pair were closely knit together as if mother and daughter indeed.

Only on one point was there a divergence of opinion. Madam West could not overcome her inborn prejudice against a love-match with an inferior. She was shocked to think Cordelia could have a taste so plebeian.

"My dear," she argued, "it is a fatal infatuation. My mother had a strain of manufacturing blood in her veins, and it wrought only woe—only woe."

This was in the second month of roses, when the air was heavy with perfume, and baskets of roses were brought in to fill the beau-pots on hearth and table, and to dry for *pot-pourri*.

The lady opened a drawer in a carved cabinet where Cordelia knew she kept sad relics, having more than once found her bending over them with weeping eyes. As she opened the drawer a faint disagreeable odour of rue seemed to float on the air.

"See," said Madam West, "here is a mournful proof of my poor mother's inherited tastes and ideas. This was made from my mother's own design. One of her near relations was a maker of sword blades, another a rare worker in gold and silver. I think they

called him a 'chaser.' She had it made expressly as a love gift for my father." And from besides a little faded velvet cap, with a tarnished gold band, she brought out a small paper and unfolded it.

"Ah?" cried Cordelia, in breathless astonishment. "Why that is the very counterpart of Mr. Vill's curious knife! How singular." That she should come across aught to remind her of him in this remote region was in itself a marvel.

"What!" exclaimed Madam West, every particle of colour leaving her face, "a counterpart of this knife? You are sure you are not mistaken? For mercy's sake do not mislead me." And she dropped into a chair as if too faint to stand.

Cordelia took the tarnished silver knife in her hand, and examined it closely. "I am not mistaken, here are the clasped hands, the lace ruffles that look like the rising sun, with rays that have been gilt, and here are initials. And just the same. I think those on the other knife were P. W."

Madam West clasped her hands together in extreme agitation. "Oh, my God! have we found the clue at last, now there is neither husband nor son to rejoice with me! P. W. Aye, Philip West," and tears started to her eyes, and trembled on their lashes.

"Nay, madam," interposed Cordelia gently. "If I remember aright, Mr. Vill informed me they stood for Peter Webb, an old gentleman who had given the knife to his mas— Mr. Hutton. He, too, had cut his initials thereon, with a date."

"Peter Webb! Ah, my dear, that would be a name assumed to cover my father's own, the better to hide his whereabouts from us. That pattern in the lace is the setting sun, and signifies the west. It is the family cognizance. Only two knives were made from the pattern. My mother gave one to my father, the other, at his request, to his twin brother Philemon, whose son Philip I married. I am myself named Philippa, as you know. There is always a Philip in the family. It was the name of my own lost darling. Oh, the weary search there hath been for that other knife, as a means to find my father. This one came to my husband from his father. Once my own beloved Philip came across a trace of it in Leicester, at an inn, where he and a party of hunting friends stopped for a draught of ale. One of the horses had fallen lame; a stone was in his shoe, out came Philip's knife, he opened the picker at this end and asked the landlady standing on the step to pass it to his dismounted companion. The woman no sooner had the knife in her hand than she

cried out: 'Why if here isn't the very marrow of the knife the young stockinger came nigh losing.' Be sure, Cordelia, Philip was on the alert. But the woman could only tell that a poor frame-knitter travelling on foot to London had left the knife behind him, and that when he came back, weary and footsore, she carefully returned it, as he said it had been a keepsake. That had been five years before, and she did not know even the young man's name; she had not seen him from that day. She promised to let us know if ever she saw him again. But we never heard. It was a terrible disappointment to us; and filled us with apprehensions." And she sighed heavily.

"It would be," murmured Cordelia. "*I* would have left no stone unturned to find it."

"Nor did we. But *now*," and she started to her feet, all activity, "we must be off at once, lest disappointment should overwhelm me once more."

"Whither, madam?" asked Cordelia, her own face in a glow.

"Whither? Need you ask? To Birmingham. To see the knife, and trace its history. But first to Mr. Bulwell."

There was a quick pull at the embroidered bell-rope, a hasty order to have the carriage horsed and in readiness, hats and mittens were

hurriedly put on, the easy-going coachman had a hint to accelerate his movements, and soon the two excited women were speeding towards Southwell to arrange with Mr. Bulwell for his attendance on a longer journey, to be taken immediately.

The dapper gentleman listened, acquiesced in the importance of the discovery, assented to every proposition, but with deferential imperturbability declared that it was utterly impossible that he could leave his office that afternoon on any business whatsoever. The legal affairs of half the county would be imperilled unless he made proper arrangements for his absence beforehand.

"I will arrange at the 'King's Arms' for post-horses at any hour you think proper in the morning, madam," said he, bowing low. "That will give us all time for preparation and repose before we start."

"Repose?" cried Madam West. "There will be no repose for me until I know where my aged father is, if living; where he lies if dead."

"Nevertheless, madam, a good night's rest will fit you better for the fatigue of travelling, and for the inquiries to be made at your journey's end."

"Fatigue! I shall feel no fatigue with that object before me." She was trembling like a leaf as she spoke.

No matter, she must either travel alone, or wait the family lawyer's convenience.

"Egad!" said he, imperturbably, treating his nose to a pinch of snuff from a silver box, bending low to preserve his speckless linen and broadcloth from contamination. "Egad! I thought the widow would have carried me off *ci et armis*. She was too agitated for an instant journey, about what may prove, after all, only another *ignis fatuus*. Poor woman, she has had enough to bear. Can it be that the old gentleman is still alive? Or has he been knocked on the head and had his knife stolen from him by the footsore and nameless vagabond who called himself a poor frame-knitter. How should a poor frame-knitter come honestly by a knife like that. But Hutton, Hutton! Was not that the name of the book-seller who opened a shop in Southwell six or seven years after the old squire's final disappearance? Um, ah, we shall see."

Mr. Bulwell, save for his private convenience, might just as well have yielded to the importunity of Madam West, and at least have gone one stage of the road that day, for all the sleep either one or the other had that night.

He had his wife's curiosity to baffle. Madam West and Cordelia were alike feverish with excitement, though from widely different

causes. The former had a growing conviction that all the mystery surrounding her long lost father's disappearance would be cleared up, possibly himself be found, an old man upwards of seventy glad of a daughter's love and care.

Cordelia entered into the widow's anticipations, all the more naturally from her own orphanhood; but she was in a glow with the prospect of meeting Vill again in spite of Mr. Baskervill's precaution, of seeing how he had borne her long absence, of making him the medium of bringing peace to the dear friend she had found in her seclusion.

She superintended the packing of a few selected garments for a brief stay, not supposing their business would detain them long.

At seven o'clock precisely, the yellow-bodied carriage of the Wests', emblazoned with a setting sun on either door, was drawn in front of the hall steps, with horses and a postillion from the "King's Arms" at Southwell.

Mr. Bulwell was already there stowing away his small valise. The ladies' luggage had been previously strapped behind and the coachman was waiting on his box.

With ceremonious politeness he handed in Madam West and Miss Carew, placed himself on the less comfortable seat facing them, where Phœbe also had a place as handmaid

for both ladies, and they were out of the gates and in the avenue with a long and trying journey before them, the end of which no one of the party could foresee.

There were holiday makers on the road, so there was little fear of footpads or highwaymen, whatever there might be from ruts or boggy places.

But the presence of so many horsemen and pedestrians all wending one way at that early hour served to remind Madam West of that which, in her new excitement, she had lost sight of.

It was the third anniversary of the terrible catastrophe that had deprived her of a doting husband. The first time she had crossed the forest since. At the sudden recollection she buried her face in her handkerchief and wept bitterly, to the dismay alike of Mr. Bulwell and Miss Carew.

All had been confusion at the time of the disaster. She had no clear remembrance of the spot where her beloved had fallen, but every oak with gnarled outcropping roots caused her to shudder as they drove past.

Yet she had no thought of turning back. She rather felt as if some beneficent spirit was beckoning her forward to clear her father's memory and preserve her home.

CHAPTER X.

FOUND.

Notwithstanding the impatience of Madam West, and the efforts of her business-man to promote expedition, our travellers did not reach Birmingham until Tuesday.

Long disuse had unfitted the ponderous carriage for the strain of the so-called Mansfield Road; and in descending the steep hill from the corner of the Nottingham race-course to the Market Place, one of the wheel tires had given way and overturned them all.

Sorely shaken, the occupants were extricated, the coachman picked himself up with sundry anathemas echoed by other and sundry whose passage was thus blocked.

Money can do much, but it could neither procure a smith to repair the damage before Monday, or hire a post-chaise and horses. The town was full of strangers, and every post-horse had been engaged beforehand.

At least so said mine host and the ostler at the "Crown." If Mr. Bulwell preferred to witness the great wrestling-match on the race-

ground to hurrying on to Derby with sore bones, and an extemporized wheel, and left them to settle the matter with their elastic consciences, that was his business.

He saw to the removal of the obstructive vehicle; ate his dinner with satisfaction, relieved the ladies of his presence afterwards, and left them to beguile the tedium of the after hours and their own impatience by gazing through the inn windows at the moving scene in the Market Place between the new red Exchange at the one end and the old black and white gaol at the other.

A row of umbrageous elms stood parallel to the unsavoury South Parade, almost shutting out the view of the Exchange and the Malt Cross. Under the shade of the tree nearest to the "Crown" Inn was placed a drapery stall presided over by a fine, handsome woman of middle age with a ruddy countenance, and resolutely determined but not shrewish bearing. Her dress was neat, not to say prim, of good serviceable material, and she laid her goods before her customers with no apparent anxiety as to results, they seeming in most cases to defer to her judgment. Through the open window madam could both see and hear; she was roused from her own dreams in listening, and called Cordelia's observation too.

"That woman handles her ell-wand as if it

was a sceptre," said she; "I wish I had half her energy. She attracts me mightily."

From a waitress she ascertained that the market-woman was a Mrs. Perkins, a woman well known and esteemed for her shrewd good sense and her integrity.

If Madam West had known all that same Mrs. Perkins could have told her, she would have gone to St. Mary's on the morrow and not to St. Peter's, and would there have searched the graveyard for a slab inscribed, "Peter Webb, died 1742."

How are we to account for the affinities of attraction towards some who hold unseen influence over our lives, or of repulsion from others?

Madam West went even so far as to send an order for Mrs. Perkins to bring some lace she was exhibiting for her inspection. The answer was returned.

"Mrs. Perkins says you will have to come down and look at it; she cannot leave her stall."

Madam West was accustomed to deference, to obsequiousness. The independence of the answer, which had lost nothing in conveyance, was too much for her equanimity.

"It does not matter," said she haughtily; and kept her seat.

It mattered everything, as she afterwards discovered, when too late.

Mrs. Perkins wore on her finger a certain signet ring which she had bought from her Aunt Ann when cash had become scarce with her; and the lacemaker was then at work under her own roof.

Mr. Hutton, whom prosperity had taken kindly by the hand, and patted upon the back, had been of late persuaded by Mr. Roper, whose time hung heavily upon his hands, that

"All work and no ploy
Makes Jack a dull boy."

And that same ex-dragoon, who had for some time fixed his quarters in the town, had also imbued a few of Mr. Hutton's friends, on whom fortune had likewise smiled, with the same notion.

He had taught that the game of fives or tennis was a healthful recreation, and tended to retard the progress of middle-age obesity. So the party, including the brothers Ryland the New Street buckleplaters, and the "poet Freeth," of the coffee-house, had built for themselves a tennis-court in the rear of the "Bell" Inn, where they took their pleasure in the summer evenings. On Tuesdays they were wont to assemble early.

Thus it came about that when about five o'clock Mr. Bulwell escorted the two ladies in his care from the aristocratic "Stork" in the Old Square, where the carriage was put up,

to Mr. Hutton's paper warehouse in the Gateway, there was no one in the front shop but Mr. Vill and his inseparable little friend Catherine. Tom, as a rule, took more to his steady-going book-loving uncle, and might have been found, no doubt, upstairs with him.

Vill was engaged in examining with critical eye one by one the edges and covers of a pile of newly-bound volumes on the counter, in order to pass or reject the workmanship; at the same time keeping up a running conversation with the chattering young damsel on the neatness of the garments "made with her own fingers," for the beautiful doll she had named Cordelia after the far more beautiful giver.

As the latch of the half-door clicked, and the attached bell gave a slight "tang" he looked up, a smile of joy irradiated his speaking countenance as Miss Carew presented herself. She was closely followed by an elder lady in deep mourning, and a gentleman in black; but he only saw the one face in which all his world centred.

Barely had his formal salutation, "Your servant, Miss Carew, I hope I see you well," left his lips, when the lady in the rear threw up her hands, clasped them together, and exclaimed with a gasp, "My God! Hath the grave given up its dead?"

It was well Mr. Bulwell was so close, for she straightway staggered back fainting, and but for his ready arm would have fallen to the ground.

It was a startling occurrence, Vill was over the counter in an instant.

"Run for your mother," he cried to Catherine, "tell her a lady hath fainted;" and off the tractable maiden ran to do his bidding.

There was no chair. A pile of brown paper in the ream did duty as a substitute, and Vill with great tenderness helped the strange gentleman to seat the lady thereon, whilst Cordelia loosened the strings of her hat and turned the ever ready fan at her own girdle to useful account.

It was a tangle of bewilderment to all, but most to Vill, who was thankful the outer steps and the closed half-door screened them from observation and curiosity.

Cordelia and Mr. Bulwell had been prepared for agitation, but not for a scene like this. The latter, supporting his client's helpless head, glanced from Vill to her in evident perplexity, whilst Cordelia, who conveyed to Vill the meaningless information, "It is Madam West," seemed to be equally puzzled.

She was still in a deep swoon when Mrs. Hutton came to their assistance with a small

cut-glass bottle of foreign sal ammoniac with which Dr. Ash had favoured her.

It was some time before the pungent essence applied to the nostrils took effect, then a sigh preceded the opening of the closed eyes. The blue lips and pallid cheeks resumed their natural colour.

"Thank God! she revives," cried Cordelia, as her friend looked round in dazed bewilderment and asked, "Where am I?"

Her eyes rested on the handsome face Vill bent over her uneasily, and she seemed for a moment in danger of a relapse.

A flood of tears came to her relief, she was able to take a sip of gooseberry wine, and then she put the singular question: "Who is that young man?" in a tone of breathless expectation.

"He is Mr. Vill, madam, our apprentice," answered his mistress.

"Do you mean Vill or Phil?" again she asked with eagerness, her eyes dilating as she spoke. "And hath he no other name?"

Cordelia and Vill looked at each other marvelling to what this inquiry tended. Mr. Bulwell begged the lady not to agitate herself.

"He hath ever borne the name of Vill under this roof, madam; his other name is Field!"

"Field! The villain!" she almost shrieked,

and started to her feet, then fell back as if about to swoon again.

"Pray control yourself, Madam West, the name of Field is common," urged the lawyer, himself much disturbed.

Vill had again offered the sal ammoniac to the nose so singularly like his own. He knew too well who was meant by "the villain."

Opening her eyes, she caught at the hand which held the phial, and cried out excitedly: "The name he bears may be common, but that hand is not common. How came you by that scar?"

"I am not quite sure, madam, I *think* I hurt it with a door when I was quite a child," was his answer, in some doubt as to the querist's sanity.

"Ah! I knew it, I knew it! Oh, Phil, my boy, my boy," and clasping her hands together, once more she sobbed aloud.

"Egad, this is strange! Is there any one here who can testify to this young man's paternity?" inquired Mr. Bulwell, addressing Mrs. Hutton, aware now whither the queries tended.

The question startled Vill, and made his pulses beat to a strange tune. Madam West held his hands and scrutinized his features with eager indescribable yearning in her own.

"Pat," called Mrs. Hutton to the big lad who stood at the inner doorway with mouth

agape, "hie thee to thy master at the Tennis-court, and desire him to come hither speedily." Then turning to Cordelia she added: "Miss Carew, peradventure thy friends would prefer to wait for my husband in my parlour. Vill, lend thy young arm to support Madam West, Catherine can watch the shop until Pat returneth."

When William Hutton entered his sitting-room he stood for a moment on the threshold, struck as much by the presence of Madam West and Mr. Bulwell, as by the remarkable resemblance of Vill to the former. Nor was Cordelia Carew's presence less unexpected. He had seen Mr. Baskerville only that afternoon and heard she was still at West Hall.

He bowed. "Your servant, Madam West and Miss Carew; your servant, Mr. Bulwell. To what do I owe this honour?"

Cordelia responded, "Madam West came hither, sir, to compare a knife she possesses with one I have seen in the hands of Mr. Vill, and to learn what she can of its history."

"But first, sir," hurriedly interrupted Madam West, "I would learn something of this young man's name and parentage."

"Ah, that I cannot tell, madam," said he deliberately as he took a seat, feeling that now the time was certainly come for disclosure, yet not knowing how his wife might regard his reticence.

"Not tell?" cried the widow.

"No, madam. I found him and the woman he called mother on the steps of the Market Cross eleven years ago this month. They were in great poverty. I sheltered them and relieved their distress. She and her husband had sheltered me in their wretched hut when benighted in Charnwood Forest in February, 1750."

"February, 1750," echoed Mr. Bulwell, as if making a mental note.

William Hutton, bending forward on his chair, continued: "The woman had fled with her boy from the cruelty of her husband, Francis Field and a woman they called Peg Harris. Kicks, blows and starvation had been the boy's portion."

All listened intently; Madam West groaned, but she did not interrupt.

"Indolence and crime contaminate. To preserve the bright lad and relieve the woman I proposed to take him as an apprentice. She accepted the offer thankfully. In parting she showed no motherly grief. Poverty may blunt affection. She called the boy Bill. When I had seen him in Charnwood with his hand bound up, he persistently called himself 'Vill.' So I dubbed him Vill when he came to me."

"How was the child clad?" interrupted

Madam West with trembling voice, as her hand sought and held that of Vill, whose agitation was becoming as great as hers.

"In dirty rags, madam, although playing with an embroidered ball.

"Oh, yes, yes, yes. I wrought it! Oh, my boy, my long lost boy, my Phil, have I found you at last?" she cried, laying her tear-wet cheek against the hand she held, which trembled in her clasp.

Vill or Phil had alternately flushed and paled, glancing from Cordelia to Madam West, his mind in a tumultuous whirl. He now dropped on his knee at her feet.

"Ah, madam, is it possible that my old dreams of a mother's love and kisses could be true! I have no actual memories of kindness until I came under this roof," and he kissed the delicate hand that clasped his own.

Practical Mr. Bulwell interposed. "Stay, madam, we are getting on too fast. Your hopes outstrip evidence. Remember, Field's wife had a son about the age of your own."

"Aye, sir, but I saw the two boys in the hut together. Field's lad had as black a crop as his father. Vill's has darkened since he came to me. She told me her boy died in Derbyshire."

"What further evidence do you need, I

feel that my son is before me," urged the mother; "I see his father in his face."

"Maternal instinct, Madam West, is not legal proof; the heir-at-law will demand something more."

"I think, sir, the proof is before us. The family likeness is indisputable," remarked Cordelia with some warmth.

"He certainly favoureth the lady," agreed Mrs. Hutton.

At that moment her husband who had left the room, returned with the unstuffed ball. Do you recognize this, madam?" he asked.

She caught at it eagerly. "Aye, aye. My boy was playing with it near the gates when he disappeared. His hat was discovered by the side of the swollen beck. We found no other trace of him, and mourned him as drowned. Ah, Phil," and she drew his face to her between both hands, "my heart assures me my long lost darling is here."

"And mine, that I have found a mother indeed;" and in another moment they were clasped in mutual embrace.

All eyes were moist, even those of lawyer Bulwell, who took refuge in his snuff-box, then, true to his training, said with decision, "I quite concur in Madam West's belief; but we have adversaries to fight, who will yield to nothing but *proof*."

"Well, sir," added Mr. Hutton, who had hoped to avoid saying more, wiping the dew from his ample forehead as he spoke, "the boy had been about a year apprenticed when Mrs. Field, again fleeing from her husband, brought that ball-skin to me. 'Can you keep a secret?' 'I can.' 'That lad is no child of mine, or Field's. Peg Harris brought him to us three weeks after the Christmas you came. That was his ball. I believe Peg had stolen him out of revenge from gentlefolk they hated. He was to be trained to crime and brought to the gallows. I couldn't see it and ran off with him.' 'Whose lad is he?' 'Couldn't learn.' 'I don't like to keep a stolen child.' 'Better here than begging or stealing. You'll make a man of him while I seek his folk. Take care of the ball.' She went. I've never seen her since."

A shudder ran through his breathless hearers at the word "gallows," but they kept silent. Now Phil started to his feet.

"That explains all!" he cried. "Oh, master, why did I not know this before? Hours, nay years of agony might have been spared me. The thief who tried to force your door was that man Field who called himself my father. All my savings went to hold him back from claiming me from you, until at last he urged me to rob you. I shrank from him appalled.

And then he threatened to break in and accuse me. It was that set me to watch; to plan bolts and locks. I could secure the premises, I could neither see my master robbed, nor accuse my father."

"My poor Philip!" murmured the mother.

"I knew he was brave!" said Miss Carew to herself.

"Ho! so that was why you objected to identify the rogue in the dungeon?"

"It was. I suffered tortures night and day; such tortures none can guess," and his fine eyes sought those of Cordelia Carew. "I felt the crime and dishonour clinging to my name as a blight upon my future, a barrier in my path. And all this might have been spared me, master, by a few words from you."

"And they ought to have been spoken," burst from Mrs. Hutton.

William Hutton felt uncomfortable. He saw the seldom-kindled spark in the brown eye of his wife.

"Mrs. Field had my promise. 'Don't tell the lad till his time is out, or I can trace his friends. It might make him restless and indolent.' 'Agreed.' I made a mistake, Phil, no doubt."

"There are promises better broken than kept, William. A secret that concealeth a

crime should be laid bare," cried Mrs. Hutton, but that was the last he heard of it from her.

"It matters nothing *now*; but woe be to Field, or Peg Harris, if ever they cross my path again!" cried Phil, his head erect, his eyes aflame.

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF THE OLD DESK.

Strong emotion whether of joy or sorrow is exhausting. Mrs. Hutton, conscious of this, had risen, unlocked a new mahogany bœuffet, and brought forth wine glasses and decanters of home-made wine. They had not yet risen to the luxury of foreign wines and spirits in a well stocked cellar. As she passed Philip West (for so we must henceforth call him) she said in tones intended only for his ear: "Do not mar the felicity of an hour like this with ill-timed threats; 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay.' Thank him for thy preservation and restoration to thy mother, uncontaminated by crime, and leave the punishment of the evildoers to the Lord."

"Madam," replied he aloud, "if I could forgive the fiendish malignity which devised my ruin body and soul, I could not forget the wretchedness and misery they must have inflicted on my mother, and the father I can never know. If the Lord should put that man or woman in my hands, I shall regard

myself as the appointed instrument of his wrath, and shall not spare."

He had learned the doctrine of divine appointments under that roof, and what more could she say.

She only shook her head as she handed round the wine and cake, and murmured, "Ah, human judgment is weak."

"And human nature is strong, madam." (He no longer said mistress.)

"I applaud your spirit, Mr. West," came proudly from Cordelia, and oh, how sweetly sounded his new name from her red lips. "Forbearance in your case would be pusillanimous."

"Your approval, Miss Carew, is flattering, and does me honour," he replied with a bow, which if not learned in courtly society was neither stiff nor ungainly.

Healths and sentiments went round with the wine, and there was no stint of either.

Time was speeding. Phil, who had left his newly-found mother seated on the moreen sofa to assist Mrs. Hutton in handing round the wine, lingered for a few minutes by the side of Miss Carew, whose face had the glow of exalted enthusiasm. How the glow deepened as his few low words fell on her ear, was only seen by him. The green moreen curtains veiled her from the rest.

Presently Madam West's voice called their attention, and broke in on the catechism through which Lawyer Bulwell was putting Mr. Hutton.

"Sir," said she, "I have had the joy to find here unexpectedly the lost son I did *not* come hither to seek, and I thank you gratefully for your care of him. In my transports, I had for the moment lost sight of my true errand. I came hither to seek the counterpart of this knife," and she held it out on her palm.

It was for Mr. Hutton now to look amazed. "Thy knife, Phil, thy knife!" he exclaimed in haste.

Out it came. There was a general crowding round. The two knives were examined. Both were well worn.

"They are as like as two peas," was the general exclamation.

"How came you by that knife, madam?" asked William Hutton curiously.

"Nay, sir, how came you by the other. It was the property of my father, was made expressly for him, this one for my uncle. The P. W. on each stood for Philip West, and for Philemon his brother. The Setting Sun is the family crest."

By this time the warehouse was closed for the night, and Thomas had entered the parlour quietly and unnoted.

William laid his hand on his brother's shoulder, and answered with impressiveness: "It was given to me, in the presence of my brother here, more than twenty years ago by my best friend, an old gentleman named Peter Webb who died in my arms. I kept it for his sake."

Madam West's countenance fell. "Then my father *is dead*," said she despondingly, her hands dropping on her lap.

"Sir," interrogated the lawyer, "can you oblige by a description of this said Peter Webb?"

"Yes, I have a good memory.—He was a tall spare man, wore rusty black, stooped in the shoulders, had a wig. His eyebrows were silvered, his piercing grey eyes, deep sunk, seemed to read you through—and," here he regarded Madam West intently, "allowing for age, he resembled both yourself and Phil strongly. I was reminded of his dying features when Squire West's head rested on my knee in Sherwood Forest. Sister Catherine said I was always fancying likenesses."

"*Your* knee," gasped madam, greatly agitated. "Pardon me, that I did not remember you, sir. All was confusion, but I thank you again for the good service."

Here the lawyer interposed again. He had recognized the description but admitted no-

thing. "Where did this Mr. Webb live when you knew him, sir?"

"With my uncle, George Hutton, the stockinger, in Woolpack Lane, Nottingham."

"Ah! so near!" ejaculated Madam West.

"Made he no statement before he died? Had he no friends?" put Mr. Bulwell.

"Friends, yes, Dr. Deering was one. Mr. Webb was a mystery to them all. I slept in his room, sir. One night he warned me to avoid the rocks on which he had shipwrecked his life—anger, a jealous woman with a sharp tongue, and a rash oath. He died suddenly in the night, sir. In agony for speech, gasped out, 'My name is not—' choked again—struggled—got out, 'My name is Ph——' something unintelligi——. By heavens! It was *Phil!*" And Mr Hutton started from his chair as the long obscure meaning dawned upon him.

"Egad! This is altogether strong presumptive evidence, madam, but—a—left he no papers, nothing, sir, but that knife?"

"William Hutton stood for a moment staggered. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed again! "what an oversight," and darted from the room. He was heard calling for a candle, and before the wonder at his disappearance had subsided back he came with the thin yellow packet so long hidden in the old oak desk, with its seals broken.

"There, sir," began he, as Mr. Bulwell, snuff-box in hand, pounced upon the paper, and Madam West gave a short, sharp, eager cry; "I bought my uncle's old desk when his goods were sold by the widow. It appeared empty. By mere chance I discovered that paper eight years ago. I was in haste, must have thrust it back to be read at leisure and never thought of it again until now. Its preservation has been little less than a miracle."

"*You* may call it so, sir, I call it culpable negligence," cried the commonly cautious lawyer, in a fume, from the window where he had carried the paper to the waning light. "Fine custodians, your uncle and yourself, of valuable documents, sir! Here is the missing will of Philip West, formerly of West Hall, thrust loosely into an old desk and left to chance, with all its consequent issues; and more, for here, madam, is an inclosure for you. 'To my beloved daughter, Philippa West.'—Miracle indeed! Gross negligence!"

Madam West, herself, was too much overpowered for speech. William Hutton seemed struck dumb, his fluency had deserted him.

A calm voice stilled the commotion. "Thee dost not seem to believe in miracles, sir; yet never was the ruling of Providence more plain. The paper had stuck fast in a crack, out of sight. If William had not spent his

last shilling to buy that desk for love of his uncle, the will might never have been discovered at all. Or discovered too soon."

"Too soon, it could not have been discovered too soon."

"Verily, friend, thou art over hasty. If that will had been in thy hands many years ago, no knife would have been sought for here; Madam West might still have mourned her son, and our upright Phil still have been the prey of a villain. The hand of Providence, not of negligence, hath kept those papers back." The little woman could not hear her husband censured unwisely.

The agitation of the widow's mind, the faded brown ink, the yellow paper, the trembling hands that held it, made Peter Webb's long reserved communication undecipherable in the dim light.

Mastering her impatience, Madam West apologized for her lawyer's blunder.

"Pray pardon Mr. Bulwell if in his zeal for his clients he forgot what was due to my dear son's good friends. The gratitude of a lifetime cannot repay what I owe here. No matter the delay of these documents now my son is restored to me, and if all be true I have heard, a son of whom I may be proud." (If there were hot blushes behind the green curtain only Cordelia felt them).

Mr. Bulwell had fidgeted, taken snuff, used his handkerchief during this speech. He had a word to say.

"I admit I was over hasty, but—a—madam —I fear you are not exercising due caution. You are accepting circumstances as proof. I do not dispute the validity of this will, but I do not consider the identity of this young man with your lost son as legally established. We have yet to find the people who kidnapped him, the woman who left him here."

William Hutton lost his patience. He snatched up Phil's right hand and held it out.

"Look you, Mr. Lawyer, I've no belief in quirks. Phil carries his identity in his own hand. Look there. How was your son's hand injured, Madam West?"

"He ran into the house in a fright at some 'ugly woman who wanted to take him,' he said—a beggar, we supposed—and trying to shut her out trapped his hand between the door and the jamb."

"Ah! *Peg* is hideous!—You had a doctor to the lad. What did he say?"

"He said the boy had spoiled himself for a sportsman or a soldier; he would never be able to pull a trigger. He was obliged to remove a splintered bone from the back of the hand. It was frightfully crushed."

"There, sir, any surgeon can prove *that*. Dr. Dowler said it, Dr. Ash has said it, and we know it for a truth."

"Is that so?" said the wary man of law. "Then he *doth* carry his identity in his own hand. Let me congratulate you, Squire West," and he offered his hand to Philip, who, as yet, was scarcely conscious of his own importance.

Patience had brought in candles and snuffers during this controversy. She caught a few words and left the room in dumb amazement.

Madam West, reminded of the flight of time and the unread documents, rose to depart.

They were pressed to remain and partake the family supper, but the lady considerately and courteously declined.

"We have already trespassed too long," she said, "and both Miss Carew and myself will need repose. My son"—she hesitated—"you will accompany me."

"If Mr. Hutton——"

"Certainly, Phil, and take a lantern. Pat shall go before you with another. It is nine o'clock and there is no moon."

"We shall be back before bed time," said Phil over his shoulder as they were going.

"Back! You are not coming back—here?" exclaimed Madam West in alarm.

"I must, madam," replied her son with respectful decision. "My indentures are not yet cancelled."

"Those indentures are not binding, sir. If they were legal, you are over twenty-one, and that cancels them," put in Mr. Bulwell.

"That may be law, sir, but it is not justice. I cannot take advantage of it. All I know or am, I owe to Mr. and Mrs. Hutton. To quit abruptly would cause them much inconvenience. In a fortnight my term expires. I cannot behave dishonourably to the man who hath been more than a father to me."

"Madam West can scarcely require it," put in Cordelia, whose idea of trade had been considerably modified by dwelling with her guardian.

"But, pray, consider, Miss Carew, the apprentice hath become Squire West, and a *gentleman*, *Armiger* in all deeds," urged Mr. Bulwell, who was more shocked to find the representative of the Wests in a dependent position than he could express. That the young man himself should have so little innate perception of his own dignity as a landed proprietor was something too dreadful for contemplation.

"The more reason he should act honourably, sir," the young lady responded.

Phil's simultaneous answer was: "Ingrati-

tude is not surely the qualification of a gentleman, sir."

"Surely not, my son, I respect your scruples," was the mother's comment. "But in my widowhood I have hungered so much for a son to love me, I may be pardoned if I overlooked the claims of others."

This was a sort of over-the-shoulder conversation as they picked their way, lantern lit, to the Old Square, then the abode of the *élite* of Birmingham, though its fortunes had fallen wofully even forty years ago when not a vestige remained of its verdurous tree-set inclosure.

On the steps of the "Stork," Phil took his leave, not willingly, but sensibly. Madam West was reluctant to part with her newly-found son so soon, but he begged leave to depart. His reason may sound very unheroic, very unsentimental, but it was admitted. "It is not fitting, madam, that I should appear in this place, as your son, in the common dress I only wear about the warehouse. It would annoy Mr. Baskerville, I am sure, to know that Miss Carew had been so much as seen in company with my working suit—I need not say—with myself. Apart from that, I feel you must require rest, and you will be anxious for privacy to read the papers you have recovered so strangely."

"Your grandfather's will has yet to be read, sir," suggested Mr. Bulwell.

"Do you not think that had better be deferred until the morrow?" was the counter suggestion. "We shall all be then in a more composed frame of mind to listen. At present I hardly know whether I am myself or someone else."

He kissed the hand of Madam West, with the strangest of strange sensations, lightly pressed the palm of Miss Carew, shook hands with Mr. Bulwell, and having made an appointment for the morrow raised his hat and turned back with Pat, his head swimming, all his plans and ideas topsy-turvey.

If any one needed privacy and repose he did. He had never seen a play, had not seen how people rush into each other's arms upon the stage on the slightest provocation, or how parents adopt long lost children impetuously without pause for reflection.

There was no effusive display of affection in the house where he had grown to maturity, though no wife or mother could more tenderly care for the welfare of husband or children than Mrs. Hutton. No love had been shown towards him by those outcasts who had claimed a child's obedience from him, and he had rendered to them no love. He had early learned to dread the man he knew as "father."

It was only since he had known Cordelia Carew that he had plumbed his own heart, and learned there were depths of feeling never until then aroused.

He had wakened only that very morning with the shuddering reflection that he was the son of Francis Field. He had wondered how it was Dolly, his mother, had never come to look upon him in all those years.

In a few hours the chains had fallen off his soul. A sweet faced woman he seemed to remember in a far-off dream had claimed him as her son, and his own breast had throbbed and beat with yearnings never known until then. It was all new and strange, he could hardly persuade himself that it was real and not a delusive dream. He had felt for the first time in memory a mother's tears and kisses on his cheeks, and all the manliness of his nature had melted. He would have given anything for an hour with her alone, when he could have poured out his soul to her as a little child.

So he was no longer an apprentice, no longer Vill Field, but Squire West, a man with ancestors and property! And all this had been brought about by Cordelia Carew!—Ah! he was no longer under ban. He no longer was afraid to seek her love, no longer afraid to face her guardian and avow

his own devotion. The world had gone round since morning. He was another man with his new name.

"Well, my lad, is Fortune's spinning-top buzzing in thy brain yet," was William Hutton's salutation on the doorstep; "or canst thou walk without reeling? Jack Cotterwell hath been here seeking thee, and is afraid thou'lt have nought to do with him now."

The new squire was brought down with a jerk, but he answered promptly, "Jack ought to know my metal better. Fortune or no fortune I'll stick to Jack."

CHAPTER XII.

PETER WEBB'S SECRET.

A COMFORTABLE double-bedded room had been assigned to Madam West and Miss Carew, at the roomy "Stork." Thither they had at once retreated, and there Cordelia, after mutual embraces and congratulations, left Madam West to read in privacy and quiet the sacred missive so mysteriously preserved.

Her eyes were dimmed with fast falling tears as she read, for every word had been shaped by a beloved hand then mouldering in the grave, and she seemed to hear the voice of the dead repeating the syllables in her ears. It ran thus:

"Woolpack Lane, Nottingham, July, 1741.
"My dearly beloved Philippa,

"When this comes before your eyes, the trembling hand that traces these lines will be cold and stiff. I am not so old in years as old in sorrow, so old and changed that I have passed over my own lands unchallenged

and unrecognized by those who had known me alike in boyhood and in manhood. Who in the shabby, decrepid, wrinkled old fellow, whose bent shoulders and sunken eyes, even more than his shaggy grey brows, seemed to betoken patriarchal age, could expect to find the stalwart hot-blooded squire who, only ten years before, had quitted West Hall in a rage, a man in the prime of life who had not reached his fortieth year?

"Alas! that I should live to write it: in that hour of ungovernable rage I bound my soul with a fearful oath never to put living foot on my own floor again, never to look again on the face of the wife from whom I fled, or child of hers. And not content with that, I put spurs in the sides of my good horse and galloping madly over heath and furze to Southwell, bound Lawyer Bulwell and his son by an oath as strong never to reveal the secret of my business or my whereabouts whilst I should live. The old man remonstrated, but I was firm, and under threats to remove my business and my confidence elsewhere they took the oath I dictated.

"My child, my child, in that accursed hour I severed the strongest ties of life and went forth a homeless wanderer, a prey to remorse and agony. I left the country, travelled far and wide, but never to escape the lash of my

own conscience. A second day had not gone by before I yearned to clasp to my bosom wife and child, to breathe and receive forgiveness. But my oath—surely prompted and registered by Satan—rose before me in letters of fire, and shut me out of my Eden, as the Angel's flaming sword shut Adam out of Paradise.

"For weeks I was little better than a maniac, for oh, my darling child, I loved your mother and you with my whole soul; and second only to my living treasures loved the home of my ancestors.

"In my contrition I endeavoured to make what reparation I could to my misguided and deserted wife. I left her undisputed possession of the Hall and the estate, the latter subject to the management and control of Mr. Bulwell, who took his instructions from time to time from me. For myself I reserved only a very slender income in comparison. I had the fullest faith in Mr. Bulwell, but I bound him to furnish accounts alike to your dear mother and to me. And I required to have your mother's receipts for monies paid. They were sent to me through various agents, to none of whom was my real name known—and not even Mr. Bulwell knew where I sojourned or that I passed in the world as Peter Webb.

"As Peter Webb I sailed for distant parts;

to occupy my mind embarked in merchandise, and if gold could have satisfied the craving of my soul I had enough and to spare. But gold to a man fleeing from himself was dross. I flung it away right and left until some good spirit bade me hoard for Philippa, the dear daughter I had left without even a farewell kiss. It lies now in the Bank of England payable to you—and only to you or your order through a bank. And may the gold bring greater blessing to you than to your miserable father.

"I had been wandering six years or more, when I found letters waiting me in London with the overwhelming intelligence that my poor wife had died a prey to grief and ceaseless lamentations. That filled the cup of bitterness. I was for a time distraught. Then, at a sacrifice of thousands, I turned my face homewards. I felt as if I had killed your mother and orphaned you, and if I might not take you in my arms and soothe your grief I determined to keep watch over you from a safe distance.

"As a poor old broken-down tradesman I took refuge here; and here as Peter Webb I am likely to breathe my last. Once or twice a year your broken-hearted father hath crossed the forest to lay a penitential sprig of rue upon your mother's tomb. Hath strayed

to look upon the home he might never enter more, and to breathe a silent blessing on thy young head. At such times hath Mr. Bulwell seen me and furnished his report. Last week he gladdened my sad heart with the best news I have had for many a year. Thou art likely to wed thy cousin Philip, Philemon's son. May God bless the nuptials, my beloved child.

"I have heard, too, thou hast no knowledge of the cause that banished me; hence this confession.

"My Philippa, I would have thee beware of that which drove me forth an outcast from home and affection. Beware of jealousy and a sharp tongue.

"God help us all! Your poor mother was jealous of the love I bore my own twin brother Philemon!

"Until we were born West Hall and Westhorpe had been held together. Your grandfather alienated them to provide equally for his twin sons. We both married. Philemon's wife bore a son who was christened Philip—as thou knowest. In a couple of years thou wert born. And then Philemon and I planned to re-unite the divided estate by intermarriage when you came of ripe age. To our surprise your mother objected. We laughed away her objections for the time being. And it was not until you were ten

years of age, and Philip a fine lad of twelve, that she gave full vent to her spleenful opposition.

"She taunted me with loving my brother Philemon better than herself. She made no allowance for the different pursuits of men, but with bitter acrimony accused me of neglecting her society for his. And, at last, in her bitterness declared she would rather see you dead at her feet than the wife of Philip, who would neglect you as I neglected her.

"It would serve no end to reproduce the harsh invectives she launched against us both. I was by nature a quiet, studious, but resolute man. Her taunts seemed to rouse a very demon in my breast, and angry words flew fast.

"In my unguarded wrath I uttered a fearful malediction, and took the reckless oath which made my life for ever desolate and barren.

"It hath been reported to me that in her latter hours thy mother consented to thy union with Philip, and that only the purest affection hath drawn your hearts together. But, my child, even the rosy fetters of love will gall unless there be perfect trust and courtesy between you.

"And now, my darling Philippa, farewell. If I live to see your wedding day I shall thank God, and die. May He, who searches all hearts, keep you and the man of your

choice in happiness and harmony to the end of your days is the prayer of your misguided, unhappy, but loving father,

"PHILLIP WEST."

To this paper was secured an order on the Bank of England for the payment to Philippa West of £20,000, and the interest thereon, on proof of identity.

How little had he, who passed for Peter Webb, thought what that interest would become before that paper came into his daughter's hands, or all that the knife he had given as a keepsake to William Hutton would eventually bring about.

The Mr. West who inquired at the "Stork" for Madam West on Wednesday forenoon was much more presentable than the Vill found by the travellers with a linen apron before him in his master's shop. No longer being dependent for dress on his master, or on his small wages, his best bottle-green suit with its plated buttons was that of the ordinary Birmingham tradesman, to which his build and his clearly-cut features added that which the tailor could not have supplied.

And if he had neither gold lace, nor sword, nor ruffles, nor peruke, nor dangling seals below his low-bodied waistcoat, he was erect and manly.

He had never been brow-beaten or bullied; if he had fared frugally in his growing years he had not been stinted; his education if desultory had not been defective, learned men discussing knotty points with each other or with Mr. Hutton, had unintentionally enlarged his ideas, and given tone to his mind; and, however modest he might be over his own inventive faculty, it had lent to his bearing the firmness and freedom inseparable from a consciousness of power to create.

Francis Field had been a weight on his shoulders like to Sindbad's "Old Man of the Sea," and though only a night had flown since he was rid of the burden that had borne him down he breathed and felt a new man.

As the puzzled waiter ushered him into the private room, Madam West with all a fond mother's pardonable pride, rose to receive and embrace him, privately thinking he was his own excuse for Miss Carew's love.

Mr. Bulwell was there, but not the young lady, and madam, seeing Phil's disappointed glance around, informed her son that Mr. Baskerville had been there early and borne his ward away, much against Cordelia's inclination.

"I had deemed it only polite to acquaint Mr. Baskerville with our arrival, and its object, and was quite unprepared for his

abrupt appearance or his removal of Miss Carew from my care. As a point of good manners, I expected Mrs. Baskerville would call to pay her respects, but only a Mr. Marston accompanied him."

Phil drew in his breath. "Mr. Marston, madam? I have heard——"

"That he had some pretensions to Miss Carew's hand. But Miss Carew hath a will of her own, and I could see by the haughty frigidity of his reception, that *he* hath no place in her favour."

It was some relief to Philip West to be so assured. But what did Mr. Marston's appearance and the sudden removal of Cordelia bode? If he could only have interchanged a few explanatory words with her first he would have been more content. As it was he remained a prey to doubt and feverish anxiety.

"Went Mr. Baskerville away in ignorance of yesterday's revelations, madam?"

"No, Phil, he listened gravely to Mr. Bulwell and myself, and congratulated me on the discovery of the will, but he asked, with a cynical smile, if I thought the heir-at-law or the Lord Chancellor would be as credulous as myself in accepting you as my son and my husband's lawful heir?"

Be sure, after this, Philip West had but a

hazy conception of the will read out with so much gusto by the lawyer. Indeed, he barely comprehended that his grandfather Philip West devised all his personal and landed property not otherwise entailed to his wife and their daughter Philippa, and that it secured West Hall to them and the heirs of the said daughter in perpetuity. Knowing nothing of the property, he failed to grasp details. But he was neither so obtuse, nor so utterly regardless of this world's possessions, as to lose sight of the fact that all these things were either his own or would be, and he inwardly cursed Peg Harris and Francis Field for tearing him away both from his parents and the enjoyment of so much good.

He did not stop to argue with himself that in his rough training he had gained more than he had lost. Nay, he even persuaded himself that he should have met Cordelia Carew under different auspices with no bar between them.

The will read and refolded, the lawyer proceeded to lay before him some of the duties his new rank imposed upon him; and foremost the necessity to present himself at West Hall, and at Westhorpe as the true squire, and to claim possession of the latter in right of his birth. Farther, to show himself amongst the tenantry, who could not fail to

see how closely he resembled his father and grandfather both.

This his mother pressed upon him to do without delay, she was so proud of her son, so anxious to restore him to his rights.

But he told her he had the rights of others to consider. Mr. Hutton was not likely to throw any impediments in his way, but he must leave all things under his care in train for his successor, even for his own credit. Then, he had invented certain locks and a bolt, and had entered into partnership with a Mr. John Cotterwell, who was already making and selling the same. He expected they would do a lucrative trade. Jack was a clever workman, but not much of a scholar or a business man. He was required to supplement what the other lacked. He could not break his engagement or desert his friend at such a crisis in the business; they had not long fitted up their workshops.

The mother entreated, Mr. Bulwell argued, but though Philip was respectful he was firm; and Madam West knowing the obstinacy of the Wests was afraid of appearing too persistent.

She had a woman's keen perception of another motive for delay not yet revealed to her. She saw that Philip would not quit Birmingham until he had determined his fate with regard to Miss Carew.

And she was right. He was not of an exuberant nature, not given to make confidants. He had not yet become so familiar with his mother as to lay bare the sacred secret of his fathomless love, so long suppressed, for the heiress of Carew Mount. But he had resolved to obtain audience with her and Mr. Baskerville both, before he presented himself at West Hall.

Mr. Bulwell too, who scented further litigation, proposed to set on foot inquiries for the woman by whom Phil was left with William Hutton, and for that purpose the bookseller had himself to be consulted.

All he knew he told readily. Showed the last letter of his sister, and advised inquiry at Swithland. Hiring a horse, Mr. Bulwell, grumbling at long absence from his own office, set off to Swithland to put Miss Ward and her sister through the sieve.

Meanwhile, Madam West remained at the "Stork," and Phil went back behind the counter, so that no service should be lacking on the busy market-day. He had been for some time preparing the new assistant to take his place, both as bookbinder and salesman, and there remained less to be done.

He adjusted his affairs with Jack Cotterwell, and found a young man to act as book-keeper and traveller, at all events during his absence

in Nottinghamshire, which he flattered himself would be brief.

And, letting no grass grow under his feet, he began the following week with a call at Baskerville House.

CHAPTER XIII.

HER RIGHT OF CHOICE.

It was not with the diffidence of a young inventor seeking an influential patron that Philip West mounted the high steps of Baskerville House and asked to see the owner. He had never cringed. There had always been a certain amount of independence in his bearing, and the revolution of the past few days had merely intensified the feeling.

He was not forgetful of the service Mr. Baskerville had rendered him; but he was now lifted to Mr. Baskerville's social level—his mother would have said above it—and though he came to solicit a boon it was not as an inferior seeking a favour, but simply as a younger man approaching an elder who had an inestimable gift to bestow.

It was self-evident from his reception that Mr. Baskerville was fully conscious of his errand, and was not disposed to regard it too favourably. His long upper lip was shut down tightly over the lower, and though he bowed courteously to the young squire, he

merely indicated a seat with a wave of his hand and waited in silence.

There was a chilling pause after Philip's preliminary salutation.

In a minute or so he began, "Sir, when I was a poor apprentice, with nothing to recommend me but a lock I had contrived to put together, you graciously took me by the hand, put me in the way to earn independence, and invited me to your own table. Am I less worthy your courtesy as the son of a gentleman than as the son of a vagabond?"

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Baskerville. "I hope I can foster ingenuity and industry without asking the possessor for his father. If you lost my favour it was due to your presumption. Moreover, I am not satisfied that you are the son of a gentleman."

"Madam West hath claimed me as her lost son, sir. Mr. Bulwell admits the claim, and Mr. Hutton is convinced of my identity. I should not have expected you, sir, to doubt what they believe to be truth."

"Humph! There are always fools to believe what the wise man rejects. I don't follow the multitude in my beliefs, and it occurs to me the heir-at-law will require stronger proofs than have served to content Madam West before he surrenders possession of Westhorpe."

"I am sorry, sir, you doubt the proofs of my paternity, and appear so ill-affected toward myself, since I came hither as a suppliant for your favour in a matter which concerns me more deeply than I can express. I have for years worshipped your lovely ward in secret, but until now I could not presume to lift my hopes so high. Now, indeed, I seek your sanction to lay my humble suit before Miss Carew, and abide her verdict."

"You have lost no time, sir," cried the elder crossly. "But I should ill perform my duty to old Squire Carew if I permitted my romantic ward to throw herself and her fortune away on a man who a week ago was nobody —and who may be nobody a year hence."

"You surely will not deny me the favour of an interview with Miss Carew. Her father and mine were college friends."

"Rupert Carew and Philip West *were* friends. Of *your* father, sir, I know nothing. If the heir-at-law, or the Lord Chancellor admits your claim, I may allow it. Until then, or during Miss Carew's minority, which does not expire until she is twenty-three, I cannot listen to you. I would rather have favoured the successful patentee of a good lock than a pretender to squirearchy."

Phil's hot blood was rising fast; he had kept it down with difficulty. "Sir," said he,

with his face all in a flush, "I *pretend* to nothing. But I do claim as fair a field for my honest love as you allow Mr. Marston, whether as the mere patentee of a lock, or as the owner of West Hall."

"And you shall have it, sir," said a voice which set Phil's pulses dancing to its exquisite music.

The conference had not been carried on in whispers. The door, which had stood ajar, flew open and Cordelia Carew came forward proudly erect, a vision of loveliness in azure quilted satin and Italian gauze, to which a bell-shaped hoop seemed to give additional dignity.

Philip flew towards her, and taking the hand she extended, raised it reverently to his lips.

Mr. Baskerville started to his feet aghast. "What! Cordelia Carew playing eavesdropper?"

"Not so, sir," said she proudly. "An open door and Phœbe's quick ear saved mine the pain and the dishonour." She curtsied low to the younger man, who still retained her hand. "Mr. West, I regret you should suffer contumely on my poor account." She blushed, her adorer thought most charmingly, as she proceeded: "and I likewise regret that I should be forced to this unmaidenly step to

vindicate the right of choice possessed by the humblest peasant girl in the land."

"Retire to your room, miss," said her guardian, contracting his brows; "your presence here is as unseemly as it is unwarrantable." *His* right of choice seemed in danger.

Her hand trembled in Philip's clasp, but she evinced no disposition to retire.

"Miss Carew," he began, in a voice half choked by his emotion, "your favour and condescension overwhelm me with pride and gratitude."

"Sir," replied she, "it is I who should be overwhelmed with shame for this—this intrusion, but," and again her eyes flashed, "I could not suffer you to depart with an insulting dismissal, and I disdained to meet you clandestinely in the garden as you went forth."

Mr. Baskerville would have spoken but she waved her hand for silence.

"I am aware I risk censure for boldness in overstepping the bounds of maidenly reserve, but peculiar circumstances warrant peculiar measures, and the spirit of the Carews rebels against coercion."

"Coercion, my dear Miss Carew?" ejaculated Philip in surprise and perplexity.

Mr. Baskerville sat silent, a contemptuous sneer on his tightly pressed lips.

"Yes, sir, for many months I have been little better than a prisoner, and I wish you to know it, Madam West can inform you wherefore I was carried off to her at West Hall, and she may know wherefore I was abruptly removed from her motherly care and brought hither as a captive once more. To her I must refer you for all information. She is in possession of my sentiments, unalterable and unchangeable. There are preparations now on foot for spiriting me away again on the morrow to some spa or other in company with Mrs. Baskerville and—*Mr. Marston.* It is to prevent any possible misconstruction, where misrepresentation might be fatal, that I have come forward to say I have no sure knowledge whither I am going, and that it is *against my will* that Mr. Marston journeys in our company. I desire, sir," and she turned the light of her expressive black eyes on Philip, full of tender significance for him, "that you will acquaint Madam West—and—and Mr. Bulwell with my protest against this tyranny."

Before Philip, who had listened intently and with varying emotions, could do more than press the hand he held, as a token of assent, Mr. Baskerville started to his feet in a fume.

"Tyranny, miss? There is no satisfying a

woman! I propose to send the girl, for health and society, with my wife to a fashionable spa, and she calls it tyranny!"

"My health is in no danger, sir, save from the obnoxious *society* of Mr. Marston, which you would force upon me. Was it in care for my health you dragged me away from the society of Madam West, my own mother's dear friend?"

"It is my duty and my care as your guardian, miss, to see that you do not throw yourself and your fortune away on a nameless nobody, as I was assured you were about to do!"

Philip started! Was he the nameless nobody?

Miss Carew was courtseying ironically low to her guardian. "Oh, sir, you preferred that I should throw both away on your wife's nephew." Then in another and more decided tone she added: "There shall be no throwing away in the case, sir, unless I am denied access to my friends. In that case, I shall throw both myself and my fortune under the protection of the Lord Chancellor. I have already consulted with Mr. Bulwell."

"The deuce you have!" exclaimed Mr. Baskerville coming forward in irate amazement, then breaking into the wrathful question: "And have you, you, the 'prentice

lad I have pushed forward, being privy to this indignity on your patron?"

"I have been privy to nothing, sir," answered Philip firmly; "but from all I know, and have now heard, I consider Miss Carew justified in her determination. As the guardian appointed by her father, it is doubtless your duty to preserve her from unsuitable addresses; but when you strain authority to compel her inclinations from private motives, she would do wisely to seek protection as the law provides. For myself, let me say, sir, that although Miss Carew hath been the idol of my adoration for years, the poor apprentice was compelled to worship at humble distance, and not until this day when I could offer an unsullied name, did I presume to put forth any pretensions to this fair hand. Of the repulse I met, Miss Carew appears aware; but if *she* doth not repulse me I shall not relinquish my pretensions, even though I may have to wait until she be free to make her own choice."

"Free indeed! Damme, I think the forward minx hath made her own choice with a vengeance," and down on the table Mr. Baskerville threw the painted snuff-box he had half-emptied during this altercation.

"Yes, Guardian, my choice hath long been made; aye, when my heart outran my head,

and I felt only the shame of loving a 'prentice lad. I am not likely to say 'nay' to Philip West."

So saying, she turned her eloquent eyes to meet his enraptured gaze, and surrendered her hand to his impassioned kisses, as if proud to show her guardian where her true allegiance lay.

"But *I* shall say *nay*," cried Mr. Baskerville angrily, "until your fine 'prentice lad prove the claim set up for him. We shall see whose will is strongest, and how long your foolish fancy lasts." He was one who never yielded to opposition.

"We shall, Mr. Baskerville," said the two young people simultaneously. Then with a sudden change of feeling Cordelia rushed up to the old man and laid her hand gently upon his arm.

"Dear Guardy," and her eyes were humid as she spoke, "forgive me if I have said aught to grieve you; but I could not let Philip go away smarting under insult and disappointment. You were always so kind and good to me and every one until Mr. Marston came between us, and your heavy losses soured you. I fear the refusal of Cambridge University to buy your beautiful type hath irritated you and made you so harsh and cross with Mr. West. Shake

hands with him, and forgive us both, and I will be your dutiful ward again in all things—but this one. You know Philip was a favourite of yours at one time, and how do you know but he might invent something to be of use to you."

John Baskerville was not so easily mollified, or he would not show it. "Humph," said he, "women are all alike!" and walked out of the room gruffly without shaking hands. But he left them both together and —they excused it.

We need hardly say that the strategic journey to Leamington was deferred *sine die;* but that was no token of Mr. Baskerville's surrender. He would not admit his own defeat even when Madam West came in her carriage to his door and sought an interview. The utmost he would promise was that Miss Carew should suffer no more annoyance on account of Mr. Marston, and be placed under no undue restraint.

"Let the young man's claim be established to my satisfaction," he said, "and he shall be free to come and go. I have nothing to say against him, except his presumption in lifting his eyes to the heiress of Carew Mount. And let me tell you, madam, that in making Phil a country squire you spoil a good tradesman, and rob Birmingham of an ingenious

inventor. He is a young man of parts, and hath more than locks and bolts in his brain."

"Ah!" said William Hutton when he heard it, "there spoke the prosperous type-founder and japanner, who feels himself a public benefactor. He hath elevated himself with trade, and despises the indolent ease of the mere landowner. He sees not the possibility of combination. I have had a longing for land since I was a little lad. It will go hard if trade doth not earn me an estate to hold for years ere I have done with it. I long for acres of dirt. Your Phil, madam, will be glad to exchange his acres for the activity of trade."

"God forbid!" she exclaimed. But time proved William Hutton nearer the mark than she imagined.

Mr. Bulwell had returned from Swithland. Miss Ward and her sister, grown feeble old women, had been sharp and close at first, until he made known the object of his inquiries. Then they were as open as he could wish. They told him that as far back as 1747, Dolly Field had brought lace of her own making to them for sale, but though they knew she lived somewhere in Charnwood, she always evaded inquiries about her home. Indeed they did not even

know her surname until, after missing her for years, she came back with lace for sale just when their old servant lay dying, and offered to take her place. She had proved a faithful, industrious and pious assistant, never going abroad unless to chapel, and then seeming afraid of every stranger she met. At length a big blustering red-haired fellow, with the swagger of a soldier, though he was dressed like a respectable yeoman, came and inquired for her and said Mr. Hutton had sent him. The name had proved a passport for the man, and he was admitted. His coming was evidently a great trouble to Dolly, and from what they overheard they fancied he was persuading her to do something or go somewhere with him against her will. He went away only to come again a second time, and again a third time. Then one night, when all were abed, she disappeared, carrying her few clothes and her lace cushion away with her. Whether she had gone away with the man, or to avoid him they could not tell. She seemed to have such a dread of him, they thought it must be the latter; she was too pious to do anything wrong.

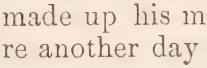
They had, however, heard only that very summer from their niece, Mrs. Catherine Perkins, a draper in Nottingham, that Dolly

Field after much wandering had gone to lodge with her in Bearward Lane, and that she found ready sale at her stall in the market for the poor woman's lace.

"Goodness," ejaculated Madam West, "I might have purchased some of that lace, and heard something of the maker but for the insolent message of the stall-keeper, that I must come down to her, she could not come up to me!"

"Independent, not insolent," corrected Mr. Hutton, who was present. "The tone of a messenger may turn fact to fable. Catherine would not insult a beggar, she would not vail her front to a duchess. But pray lose no time in seeking Mrs. Field, or she may be gone again. Make no delay on our account, Phil had his indentures handed over to him this morning. He is his own master, and hath our hearty good wishes."

But William Hutton did not say that he could lay his hand on the man who had troubled the rest of Dolly Field, since he knew it was no concern of the Wests', although he had made up his mind to call him to account before another day went by.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW SQUIRE.

The morning that saw Philip West seated in his mother's, or, rather, his own carriage, speeding northwards as fast as four post-horses could cover the ground, left Patience sighing in the kitchen for the boy she had watched over so long, and sent little Catherine Hutton crying to school for the Vill who would never stand behind her father's counter again, or make pretty playthings for her and Tom. And it sent peaceable William Hutton in quest of his tennis-playing friend Joseph Roper, with anything but a peaceable intent; notwithstanding his good wife's advice:

"Do not make an enemy of the man, William, if thou canst avoid it. He hath never been thy true friend. He hath, to my mind, the noisy emptiness of a drum, and soundeth his own note of warning. Canst thou recall aught he hath advised which hath not eventuated in loss? Much I fear thou hast been too communicative to him, and

some day he may use thy confidence to work thee evil."

"My love," said he as he was going, "when we were 'prentices together he was a mischief-maker. He took umbrage because a silly lass flouted him and set her cap at me. She was pretty but too bold for my taste. She provoked him to enlist, and in his jealousy he threatened to be revenged on me. I lacked wisdom when his swaggering boast of friendship could mislead me. Be not afraid for me now, he is an arrant coward."

Even as he spoke he was conscious what a coward early oppression had made of himself, and rejoiced that the inert and sluggish blood of the Huttons had been crossed with the vigour and energy of the Wards, which was certainly in the ascendant that Wednesday morning. But he did not take into consideration how much the change in his social position had done for him. He was now a man of substance and some importance, had been summoned on the Low Bailiff's jury, and so taken his first step into public life. As he had risen in public estimation so had he risen in his own. And was he not already in treaty for a small landed property in Worcestershire? He felt himself quite equal to cope with the blustering ex-dragoon.

It was the third week in July, the month

which had been so marked a feature in the calendar of his life. He found the man he sought, in the easily negligent undress of shirt and breeches, unfastened at the knees, (it was thirty years before the era of braces), a long clay pipe in his mouth, a half-empty tankard of ale before him, and the remnants of a beefsteak told what his breakfast had been. He leaned back in a big arm-chair, with his slippered feet crossed on the broad window-seat.

"Hah! friend Hutton," he began with a lofty flourish of his pipe in the air, but his bombastic greeting was arrested by the curt "Mr. Roper, I want a word with you," of his early visitor.

"A dozen if you like," quoth the other, pointing with his pipe stem to a seat, which William Hutton disregarded.

"Sir," said the latter, "I find you have used my name to obtain access to a poor woman whose misfortunes should have been her shield against intrusion and persecution. Used it for ends so base that only flight remained for her!"

"Oho! my virtuous friend! Is that it? All's fair in love or war. Did you think to keep a dainty tid-bit snug to yourself among your shopkeeping relations? Might not one old flame be as good as another to her?"

"You scoundrel?" cried William, now thoroughly roused. "Have you no heart that you cast a slur on an honest married woman, too virtuous to accept your own lawless offers? For myself—Pshaw!"

Roper had taken a pull at the tankard; he put it down and sat erect, glaring fiercely at William Hutton across the table.

"Heart? Had I no heart when I saw you trifling with Dolly Parker; taking my pretty sweetheart from me before my face? Had I no heart when I 'listed and left her to you? My God, man! I felt I could have murdered you for her sake then."

"Me! I wanted none of Dolly Parker, she was too forward for my taste."

"D—n you; so it suited you to say when you jilted her, and flung her off to marry that vile ruffian Francis Field. But I swore revenge, and I had time in camp and garrison to brood on my revenge, and I shall have it yet; for all that Dolly is you have made her. If you did not want her she wanted you, and I was treated like a dog between you. And you thought the clasp of the soldier's hand was *friendly*, did you? Ha, ha! What about the corn-mill that was to grind out a fortune for you? What of the tennis-court? Do you think I cared for your health or your amusement? Not I. Tennis is thirsty and exciting sport.

I thought I could lead you on to drink and wager on the game. But if, in your niggardliness, you have baffled me there, you will not baffle me when next I have the upper hand." And he emphasized the threat with a malicious grin and a tremendous oath it is needless to record.

Be sure after this Roper was seen no more at the tennis-court. His swagger and blasphemy had already made him offensive to the Rylands and other sober-minded tradesmen of the club, and his absence was hailed with satisfaction. The swearing trooper disappeared from his different haunts, and so very many peaceful years went by without sign or token of the man that Roper and his threats were forgotten, as were the little tailor and Francis Field.

Meanwhile the yellow carriage dashed along, the setting sun emblazon *d'or* upon the doors glancing in the light. Fain would Philip West have obtained a parting interview with Miss Carew, before he was hurried off to Nottingham, but that was denied and he had to be content with pouring out his regret on paper, telling all that was hoped from his journey, and looking forward to a speedy and triumphant return that should dissipate her guardian's last objections.

To Philip, whose only remembrance of

travel was of a midnight ride in a jolting cart, or a footsore tramp through rain and mud, or glare and dust, the journey in a cushioned carriage behind four post horses seemed like a flight through fairyland; the trees, the fields, the villages seemed to melt away behind them as they dashed on, and notwithstanding the jolting of the lumbering vehicle where the roads were exceptionally bad, he, for the first time, fully realized the rise he had made in life. Cottage children by the wayside lingered and dropped low courtesies, or pulled their sun-bleached forelocks as they passed, horsemen doffed their three-cornered hats in courteous salutation, and at the posting-houses where they stopped for refreshment and change of horses, innkeepers and underlings were alike obsequious and deferential. In Birmingham his sudden elevation had excited wonder, and sometimes rude comment, but no one had bowed down to the 'prentice—turned squire. Along the road, where his antecedents were unknown, the carriage and the respectful old coachman bespoke for him equal recognition with Madam West.

He was young and mortal. He had left drudgery behind. A new world was opening out to him. The unmistakable lady by his side treated him with proud affection as her

equal in all things; the lawyer, without any servility, addressed him as squire and sir, with the careful intonation which marked a sense of difference in their stations. There was nothing of the tradesman in his attire, his mother had taken care of that the day the will was read. His velvet suit came from no common loom. The buttons on his wide-skirted coat, the buckles at his breeches knee and across his high instep were of solid gold; his kevenhuller hat was laced with gold, the ruffles of his shirt were of the finest lawn, and if he had no aristocratic sword by his side, there were gloves upon the hands labour had stained. The gloss of newness had not worn away from them or the feeling of strangeness from him, but casual beholders would not notice this. It would have been singular if the subtle influence of his surroundings, and the deference of strangers had not affected his bearing somewhat. He had held his head higher and trod the ground with firmer step from the moment the bonds of Francis Field were snapped. That he was not inflated by his sudden elevation might be due to his previous experience of flattery over his safety-bolt and lock.

His manners had always been above the average; polite consideration for others had been the law of the Hutton household. When

the carriage stopped at the ancient "Crown" Inn, he assisted his mother to alight and led her up the steps with unconscious ease.

Two or three country gentlemen loitering near the entrance, doffed their hats to Madam West, as she passed in.

"By jove!" cried one. "Did you ever see such a likeness?"

"By jingo!" exclaimed another. "He is Philip West's image."

"Gentlemen," said she, gracefully bending as she turned and proudly presented the fine young man, "he *is* Philip West, our long lost son. He will be pleased to receive his dead father's friends at West Hall."

She courtesied, Philip bowed, and the two went forward towards the waiting host, leaving Mr. Bulwell to satisfy curiosity at his own discretion, and to dispatch a mounted messenger to the Hall for everything to be in readiness. Through his clerk the great news had already been conveyed thither.

This recognition almost in the Market Place had been highly gratifying both to Madam and Philip; it seemed to point to an easy settlement of his rightful claim.

After dinner, served in a private room, where was no one to criticize any possible solecism in the etiquette of the time (in which eating with the knife was not to be counted,

so long as the sharp edge of the blade was turned away from the lips), and where Philip acquitted himself beyond his lady-mother's anticipations, the three rose and together bent their steps towards the humble abode of Catherine Perkins, to whom Philip was the bearer of letters from her brothers William and Thomas.

There they encountered their first disappointment.

Drapery goods had possession of one broad window. There had been a whip and saddle in another, but habits had been contracted by Samuel and his family in their wandering camp-life that clashed with all Catherine's instincts, and she had speedily found means to transfer and settle him and his business in a busier part of the town. They found her in possession of old Peter Webb's—or Philip West's—signet ring, and willing to surrender it for what she had given, but though Susannah Finch was there spinning industriously, there was no sign of her they sought.

She had gone away the week before, whither no one could say. Something she had said before she went of disburdening her mind, but Catherine remarked, "I don't pry into other folk's secrets. What they don't tell I don't ask. Mrs. Field was a steady and pious woman, worked hard and paid

honestly. She'd ne'er have gone away without good reason."

Philip carried away on his finger his grandfather's signet ring, but that was all they had so far gained by the hurried journey.

From Bearward Lane there was a visit to Smith's bank, alike for the introduction of the new squire, and the deposit of the order on the Bank of England found so unexpectedly among Peter Webb's long neglected papers.

The banker was effusive in his congratulations, complimented Philip on his extraordinary likeness to his father and grandfather, and gave his opinion that the usurper of Westhorpe had not a leg to stand upon, and Madam West came away beaming with satisfaction.

And then followed a solemn visit to a grave in St. Mary's ground, inscribed, "Peter Webb, died 1742."

There was a damper awaiting them at West Hall.

The coming of the long lost heir had been proclaimed. The great gates stood open, tenantry and servants lined the drive and the entrance hall. As the carriage drove to the door and they alighted, hats and kerchiefs waved, and shouts uprose of "Long live the heir." "Welcome back to West Hall."

"Aye, Philip, welcome back to the home

of your ancestors," said the lady as she gave her hand to him at the foot of the steps. At the top she turned, and while Philip, overpowered, could only bow in acknowledgment, she thanked them in his name with graceful dignity, and then he, having recovered his composure, said a few straightforward words of thanks and promise which raised another deafening chorus of "hoorays."

As he passed through the hall he scarcely saw the bowing servants. The noble staircase with its carved newels and balustrade, and steps of solid oak, the armour, antlers, weapons, flambeau-sconces all seemed to come upon his memory like a landscape out of the mist.

"My old dreams were but remembrances," he said to his mother afterwards, but at that moment Nuttal, who also seemed to have a place in his past, stepped out of the ranks to inform his mistress that a tidy, middle-aged woman, carrying a basket and a lace-cushion, had been there on the Monday, very desirous to see Madam West.

"Shu said as shu had just heered as madam's son had been lost sixteen year, an' shu thowt shu knew where he mowt be found. An' I telled her as Master Philip had bin already found in Birmingham, an' then shu clasped her hands an' thanked God, an' said

it warr all right, an' her mind warr free, and shu could go away in peace."

"Alack! Nuttal, why did you suffer her to depart unquestioned? We have been travelling post in search of that very woman. Her testimony would be most important," and madam swept past him into the old squire's library on their right and sank into a chair, less from exhaustion than disappointment.

"Be not troubled on Mrs. Field's account, dear madam," said Philip bending over her. "She may return, or, if not, her voluntary statements to Mrs. Perkins and your servant are in themselves evidence."

"Aye, my son, if we had honourable people to deal with, but Mr. Bulwell can tell you they will resort to any chicanery before they surrender Westhorpe."

"Ah, that they will," replied Mr. Bulwell. "Your discovery will no doubt be a blow to them, but possession is nine tenths of the law, and our opponents will not admit your claim without a struggle. We must make an effort to recover Mrs. Field."

Mr. Bulwell was right. West of Westhorpe, as he called himself, was not disposed to surrender mansion or land. A notice of ejectment was served, of which he took no heed, and soon the law-suit of West v. West became a burning county question.

Friends of the late Philip West rallied round the widow and her newly found son, struck by his resemblance in form, feature, voice, and step; but West of Westhorpe drew round him a set of roystering squires with whom he could hunt and shoot and drink deep, and they swore he was "a right good fellow" and they would stand by him.

Philip was no horseman, he could not fire a gun, he had been brought up temperately and religiously, was neither inclined to drinking, swearing, nor dicing, and shrank with disgust from cock-fighting, ratting, and other brutalizing sports.

This was no recommendation even to his own tenantry, but as they were neither bullied nor brow-beaten, and he was not over strict in the matter of game, was "free spoken," and introduced many little contrivances into their homes for comfort or convenience, they began to respect him in spite of his "town ways."

Mr. Baskerville was not so easily won over.

CHAPTER XV.

A REASON FOR A RHYME.

Mr. Marston had made the best of the situation and withdrawn his suit, leaving the field open to his rival.

But Mr. Baskerville, irritated alike by the decisive rejection of his wife's nephew, by the insufficient profits upon his printing, and the difficulty he experienced in the disposal of the rare types he had himself designed and produced with so much cost and labour, was not willing to accept for his rich ward the young man he had himself patronized and befriended as a poor 'prentice lad. He was, moreover, disappointed that an inventor of so much promise should be lost to the manufactures and trades of Birmingham. And though he was not so unkind as to debar the admission of Philip, when, at intervals of a few weeks, he came riding over with a servant behind him all the way from Sherwood to see her, he was careful to let them know he received Mr. Philip West under protest; and that *he* could give no sanction to marriage, so long as his heirship was disputed.

"Never mind, Phil," said Cordelia brightly, when he lamented this and the miles that divided them; "the pain of absence is forgotten when you come, and when you depart I dash my tears away and look forward to the joy of your return. I was not born to mope. Perfect love casteth out fear; I have no fear of your constancy. You must trust mine. We are both young. Three years will soon pass, even if Guardy remains obdurate to the last."

That was on his second visit. As time went by and the suit of West v. West became more entangled, by the disavowal of his rights, he came to see her burdened with doubts of his own honour in holding her to her promise.

"Philip," said she, "would you not marry me if I lost Carew Mount?"

"Marry you, my sweet Cordelia? Aye, if you had not a shilling, and rejoice to claim you!"

"Then you do me wrong in supposing me less generous. I have heard Guardy say that you need both justice and a long purse to win a law-suit. I love you so well that I would fling over Carew Mount to assure you of your own inheritance. Let me hear no more of struggles between pride and love. It is my pride to love you."

And then his self-abasement only equalled his raptures at her unselfish generosity, though he told her such a sacrifice could never be

demanded. He would abandon his claim to Westhorpe rather, nay, return to Birmingham and carry on the lock-making in person.

Indeed, all his proclivities went with the handicraftsman, his associations were chiefly with the labouring and trading community. He had little in common with the country squires who formed his new society, and his eyes were blinded to the charms of their sisters and daughters.

He could not rust in inaction. He made designs for iron latches and fastenings for cottage doors to supersede the clumsy wooden things pulled open by a string and a bobbin from without, as in the days of Little Red Riding Hood, and strong catches and fastenings for windows never before opened to let in the fresh air; and then he sent the designs to Jack Cotterwell to carry out. Then he supplied the extra capital the growing concern demanded, and was quite as proud of the business he had created as of the landed estate secured by his grandfather's will.

His mother sighed and shuddered, tracing back his plebeian instincts to her own mother's remote connections—the Birmingham chaser and the sword-maker.

Those very instincts were thawing Mr. Baskerville's ice with every fresh appearance Phil put in. He had seen for himself how the

lock and bolt making-works in Egdbaston Street were prospering, had taken advantage of occasional hints the designer had thrown out for his own use; but nearly eighteen months had been checked off from the three years before he was thoroughly won over.

The tea-board of the period was of polished wood, generally mahogany.

Mr. Baskerville had already introduced lighter trays of compressed paper, japanned and pictorially decorated, such as are still in use.

"Suppose," said Phil to him one day, "after you had laid on your ordinary coats of varnish, you were to lay gold-leaf or silver-leaf in small irregular dabs upon it; then over all another coat of varnish, and pumice-stone down until the metal was visible beneath; I think it would produce a novel effect."

"Humph!" muttered the japanner, "there can be no harm in trying."

The experiment was made. A sort of transparent mottling was the result; and in a very short time Baskerville's tortoise-shell trays were all the rage; the process was a secret, and the returns were surprising.

In his satisfaction the old japanner swallowed his qualms of conscience concerning Phil, and magnanimously said, "If I had a

daughter to give you should have been welcome to her. You can marry Cordelia when you will."

But, "when you will," meant when settlements were drawn out; Phil's own peremptory decree being the absolute settlement of Carew Mount upon the heiress; a decree she resisted until Mr. Baskerville joined issue with Mr. West, saying, "My dear, you must hold Carew Mount as a harbour of refuge for Philip, in case the harpies of the law should swallow up Westhorpe and West Hall likewise, with all the locks and bolts to boot."

"I should be loth to press Cordelia to share my fortunes if I thought such a disaster possible," returned Philip with a flash of independence. But Philip hardly knew what a protracted law-suit meant.

Madam West accompanied her son to Birmingham for the wedding, fixed for the second week in April, to insure passable roads. It had been her desire to see them married in the little old church of Oxton, where the Wests had plighted their troth for centuries, but when Philip decided that Jack Cotterwell, and Jack Cotterwell only, could be his groomsman, and that the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Hutton was equally indispensable, she forbore to press the point, although she did not yield without reluctance. Perhaps

the suggestion of her own woman, a privileged individual, that Oxton Church had not proved a lucky one either in her own case, or that of her own parents, served to turn the balance. But it is certain she shrank from inviting under her roof, amongst the county friends she would call round her to witness the auspicious ceremony, either the uneducated blacksmith's son, or the bookseller who had kept the little shop in Southwell, and whose sister had a stall in the Nottingham market.

In the home-coming festivities she felt there need be no jarring of uncongenial elements; and for her son to have captivated the beautiful and elegant Miss Carew, heiress of Carew Mount, would only suggest genteel acquaintance in the years of his absence from home; so she came to the conclusion that Philip's arrangement was "perhaps the best after all."

Private carriages were so rare and public chaises of so comparatively recent introduction, that even prosperous people walked in procession to be married, or went on horseback at the head of a cavalcade.

The bridal therefore created no small commotion, and under the budding trees in St. Philip's green churchyard was quite a gathering of spectators. A polished-up chaise with wedding-favours on the horses' heads

could not stand at William Hutton's door and take up the new Overseer and his wife, who had thrown off mourning for the occasion, without attracting attention, any less than the stoppage in New Street to include the brothers Ryland, who were as much of pattern-cards in the way of plated buckles as was Mr. Baskerville's resplendent pictorial carriage, with its pair of long-tailed cream-coloured steeds, the pattern-card of the artistic japanner. And certainly, never bride who did not call the Lord Mayor father, ever set out to meet her bridegroom in greater state. The yellow carriage which bowled off from the Square with Madam West, the bridegroom, groomsman, and Mr. Bulwell, paled beside so much magnificence. And Mr. Baskerville, carrying up the aisle his gold-topped cane, was himself as resplendent as blue velvet, gold-lace and buttons could make him.

Philip, who scarcely knew himself in his suit of traditional canary-coloured satin, with buttons and buckles of gold set with amber, saw nothing much beside a vision of white satin, pearls and point-lace, and pronounced the responses scarcely assured all was not a vision to vanish with awaking.

He was, however, not so dreamy as to suffer another to take the first kiss of his bride, though her expanded hoop did protest. And

the sense of strangeness wore off among the congratulations of friends, and the day's festivities, during which William Hutton read aloud a lengthy poetical address to the newly married man, which, if not Tennysonian or Swinburnian, was fully appreciated there, and contained some excellent advice, as one or two extracts will show.

TO A NEW MARRIED MAN.

'Tis easy when married to put away strife,
Because a good husband will make a good wife,
Draw gently, be loving, good-humoured, and still,
Then you may be happy as long as you will.

Dear friend, I'm given to understand,
You've ta'en a loving wife in hand
And probably expect to share
Like others, pleasures without care:
Serenity and sunshine too,
Are things with ease you bring to view.

But pray what title have you got
To what the major part have not?
For where *one's* blest who takes a wife,
There's *two* repent it during life.
Yet this state is, though ills invade,
The happiest state that e'er was made;
For if the evils we're combating
Are evils of our own creating,
We with some prudence then may shun them,
Or cut them short when we've begun them:
The traveller should never lack,
To strike into the cleanest track.

. . . .

Allow then an experienced mate,
Long practised in the married state,
To tell you where, if you're not blind,
Content and pleasure you may find.

'Tis said *that* state is harmony,
When wife and husband *both* agree:
But I maintain, bliss holds its place
When *half* this only is the case:
Then who would miss this paradise,
When he can have it at half-price?

Use all attention on your part,
To *keep* as well as *gain* her heart;
Nor act the child, when at its play,
To cry for what it throws away:
You'll find this of all gems found yet
The richest in your cabinet.

. . .

Should common errors be descried,
Those errors ne'er in public chide;
Tenderly touch without abuse;
Nay softly plead her own excuse:
This calls that pride forth in the end
Which ever shows a wish to mend,
To cherish love, and make it thrive,
Attempt to *lead* but never *drive*.
To persevere be much inclined,
Thus you will mould her to your mind.

Contentions in the married state
From nothing oft originate:
A candle's end, a thread, a pin,
Are quite sufficient to begin;
Answers, rejoinders and replies,
Make many a serious quarrel rise,
Which terminates in deep vexation,
Nay, sometimes leads to separation.
Whene'er such altercations start,
Let silence end them on *your* part,
Then the grand point you win with ease,
And you may win whene'er you please.

When you in company shall meet her,
With kind attention always treat her:
Your satire, banter, laugh, or sneer,
On no account must glance at her;
Nor let her e'er be placed by you
In a degrading point of view.
If of the two you hold most sense
Then let it act in her defence.

These maxims I observed—adieu,
If not worn out will profit you.

For the rest jovialty and broad humour characterized the feast, over which Mr. Baskerville and his wife presided with genial hospitality, and on which their carved busts looked down in placid coldness.

Indeed, when the happy pair drove away the next morning to Nottingham with Madam and the lawyer, Philip was pleased to think that his wedding had been the means of renewing intimacies which, of late years, had been somewhat strained, and of raising his trading friends somewhat in his mother's estimation.

At all events an invitation to visit West Hall in the summer had been given to Mr. and Mrs. Hutton, and had been accepted.

Then Mr. Baskerville, who for some time had not been on speaking terms with Mr. Hutton, had shaken hands with him in hearty welcome, and in toasting the rhyming bookseller had congratulated the town on his

appointment as overseer, and congratulated him on "coming round to common sense."

The explanation of this was, that after Mr. Baskerville's visit to lamp-lit Nottingham in 1765, he had left no stone unturned to obtain a Bill for lighting, cleansing and otherwise improving Birmingham, and had found active coadjutors in Dr. Ash, John Taylor (the new banker), the Rylands, and other influential members of the community, but there were people who preferred darkness rather than light, not because their deeds were evil, but because they objected to pay extra levies, or would be called upon to remove time-honoured nuisances.

Of these opponents William Hutton had been the chief; the paper war had been strong and virulent, his pen advocating darkness and things as they were with very fallacious reasoning, simply because his own interests were threatened.

The drafted Bill required the removal of the Gateway block of buildings for the opening out of New Street. He took it as a threat to sweep away the business which had made him, and by which he was "adding acre to acre" of land here and there. Nay, until he had lost another son there had been no convincing him that the site was unwholesome and the removal of the Swine and Beast Market

imperative, and even then he prolonged his opposition until the Bill was so altered as to leave his premises intact.

It was on this slight concession Mr. Baskerville had congratulated him, for the boy who had tramped into the town footsore and hungry had become a man of influence in their midst.

His opposition removed, the Lamp Act was obtained, although shorn of its fair proportions, chiefly through his means.

As if to prove how factitious his violent opposition had been, when the "Garland" Inn, with a mortgage upon it was privately offered for sale, William Hutton snapped at the opportunity and became the purchaser, paying a certain sum down and letting the mortgage lie. *Then* he became one of the most zealous supporters of an amended Bill for street improvement, and most anxious to see New Street opened out by the downfall of the Gateway. But not until the Street Act had become law and his own premises were condemned did he disturb a brick of his new purchase. That settled, he might himself have been seen at four in the morning, with his own hands, helping to pull down the ancient pile of beam and plaster, and to build up a fine new house and warehouse on the site.

Prior to that he had awakened to the fact

that the old Leather Hall premises were too cramped for business and residence both, and were *not* healthy.

His speculations in land had so far been profitable, though he was draining his business for them. He made a fresh purchase at Bennett's Hill, Saltley, where more than once in his tramping journeys to and fro he had lingered to admire the natural panorama spread before him. Here, to be in readiness, he began to build a house which should rival Mr. Baskerville's, and was adding a couple of low wings there when the "Garland" house was pulled down.

The furniture of the old business-place went into the new one, including the old desk, but other and more stylish additions were made; the grounds at Bennett's Hill were laid out; and then there was another furnishing, when mahogany and damask were the rule, not old-fashioned, and where plate, and glass, and china filled closets and presses without stint, where foreign wines found a place in the cellar, and not only a horse for his own use, but a pony for Tom had possession of the stabling. There was also a mare kept for the convenience of Brother Thomas, who had a long courted sweetheart in Staffordshire, but the mare was stabled behind the new Garland House.

The paper-merchant had reached that point where money multiplies itself, and capital does more work than the master's own hand; though to that said "own hand" he still ascribed his success. How much he owed to slow and sure Thomas he failed to estimate, for although he had ever a careful eye to business and a ready hand that was not dainty, he was inclined to make a show and take his pleasure. Then he had also plunged into debt with his building and land buying, which was not all profit, and at much of which Thomas shook his head.

There were journeys to Aston, journeys to Nottingham and West Hall in the summer-time, and there was public business to boot in which his soul delighted. The little Quaker child, whose hat he had saved from the river, had bloomed into a stylish matron in satin and brocade, lace and lawn. There was no suggestion of broken boots and dilapidated garments in the kerseymere or broadcloth coats and satin breeches of the gentleman who was dubbed esquire by his fellows. For William Hutton had ceased to be a mere overseer of the poor, and become one of the most active of all the commissioners of the Lamp and Street Acts he had formerly opposed. And until those same commissioners swept the Old Cross away, and found the

court a more convenient and important location, he might be found two days a week shrewdly dispensing justice as a commissioner in the Court of Conscience or Requests, in the room above the steps where he had once sat friendless, hopeless and homeless.

And there we must leave him for awhile, alike making enemies and friends with his shrewd even-handed decrees, whilst we follow the fortunes of others.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MISSING WITNESS.

The Court of Conscience or of Requests was a court of equity, established during the Tudor dynasty for the recovery of debts under five pounds. Money changed its value, the limit of the court did not, but its application was wide, its fees were small, and there was no vexatious delay. But for the debtor who could *not* pay, and whose creditor was harsh, there was always the prison in prospect, generally a loathsome pit of disease and iniquity. It was William Hutton's endeavour to soften the rule of the court, but whatever the decision, plaintiff and defendant *both* could rarely be satisfied.

He himself, dispensing justice to small debtors, was, in course of time, hampered and harassed by debts and duns consequent on his land-buying, or rather brought about by a piece of rascality afterwards traced to Roper as the wire puller of the legal puppets. A property was offered to him in 1779, at a low figure, the bulk of which was to remain on

mortgage. He was averse to buy. It was pressed upon him. The bargain had barely been made six months when the lawyer threatened foreclosure unless the mortgage was paid off peremptorily. To find the six hundred pounds so unexpectedly was most embarrassing and crippling to his business, already suffering. It was almost a repetition of his corn-mill experience. And in his enlarged premises larger capital was required. The business itself was too sure, and the returns too large to make the congestion more than temporary. In spite of debts he was rapidly making a fortune, and people he was passing in the race were as envious as the little tailor had been, if they did not show it as openly.

Ere long he gave the ill-disposed fresh cause to look askance, for not only Birmingham, but all literary England rang with his name.

In removing his stock and furniture from the old premises to the Garland House, which, ere long, looked from its many eyes down the long vista of regenerated New Street, the package of papers he had bought from Mr. Finch, carefully labelled by Phil, came to light. He had no leisure to sort them at the time, but they renewed an old idea.

In his public capacity as overseer—commis-

sioner alike of the Lamp Act and the Court of Conscience—and in his private dealings in old books, he had accumulated historical material, or knew where to obtain it. And in the autumn of the year that confirmed Philip West's position, he had ready for the press as unique a "History of Birmingham" as any author ever wrote of any town; though it was not until March, 1782, that the work was published.

The publication of his first book is an important event in the life of any man; how much more so when the author has been self-educated and has risen to eminence by his own perseverance and application.

It was a proud moment for William Hutton, when his sister Catherine, leaving her business in the care of Susannah Finch, hired a chaise and came all the way from Nottingham to congratulate him, attended by their brother Samuel and his son.

It was as proud a moment for Catherine Perkins, who told her niece and namesake (then a clever woman, in her twenty-sixth year, her mother's nurse and deputy, and herself an embryo author), "You may thank your old aunt's discernment for the great triumph of this day. I saw that William was destined to raise the name of Hutton out of the dust, and I lent the lad a helping hand.

This book repays me a thousand-fold," and she laid her hand on the copy he had presented to her.

It was altogether a memorable year to him. In July he returned his sister's visit, when he remarked to her, "A man may live half a century and not be acquainted with his own character. I did not know I was an antiquary till the world informed me from reading the "History." When told I could perceive it myself. The Antiquarian Society at Edinburgh has chosen me a member, and sent me a diploma to splice F.A.S.S. to my name. You little expected that, Catherine?"

He as little expected that a second edition would be called for before the year was out, or that a hearty dinner eaten in haste would bring him near the verge of the grave. As it was, the author's first book bade fair to be his last. But he had the best of nurses in Catherine and her mother, who ignored her own illness to watch night and day beside the husband dearer than herself. He had also in Dr. Ash an undaunted and skilful practitioner, and he had a sound constitution to bear the repeated blood-letting, then deemed imperative.

To the joy of his own family, and that of the Wests', "finis" was not written to his life's volume prematurely. He lived to do them and the world good service ere that came about,

and the doctor made a marvellous mistake when he said : " You will never be the man you have been."

Anxiety and attention to him had done far more permanent evil to his good little wife, and not all the thousands he was then worth could arrest the progress of the malady slowly sapping her life. To bring back health a man and horse were at her service for daily exercise on a pillion. She visited Aston and the Wests', but to little advantage.

It was to Carew Mount she rode. That mansion Philip and his wife had for some time occupied as a residence when increasing business demanded his frequent presence at the flourishing works of Cotterwell and Co., although they spent most of their time with Madam West in their Sherwood home.

Like a sunbeam Cordelia West had irradiated the old Hall she entered as a bride. From her force of character not less than the prestige of her own family name she took her fitting place in county society, and all that was doubtful about Philip's antecedents vanished when they stood side by side, he polishing and refining from constant association with his wife and mother.

The former was a splendid horsewoman, and ere long he who had never mounted anything more fiery than his master's steady-going

nags, and never taken a longer ride than to Cotterwell's smithy in Digbeth and back through the Market Place, would gallop away by her side over the rough common to Southwell with as sure a seat and firm a hand as his own groom.

There is not a question that they idolized each other, and when children were born to them, if possible the mother was dearer to him than the wife; and her faith in him never wavered.

The only bar to their happiness was the tenacity with which the usurping Oliver West held Westhorpe, and disputed Philip's title.

As Mr. Baskerville had predicted, Philip found the establishment of his claim both more difficult and more costly than he had at all calculated.

There were actions and appeals, the cause was traversed from court to court, and when Mr. Baskerville died in 1775, and was buried in a vault on his own premises self-prepared in the conical building where he had cast his famous type (the Baskerville type still unsold), the West law-suit was still undetermined.

The Lacemaker who called at West Hall on a given date was advertized for in the *Nottingham Journal*, the *Birmingham Gazette*, the *Leicester Journal*, the *Derby Mercury*, Burrow's *Worcester Journal*, but never a

response came. Then, local organs failing, the *Times* was tried, with no better success. Wherever Dolly was she was no reader, and fear had made her so guarded and close about her own affairs that no neighbour was likely to say, "Here is something that concerns you."

Nine more years had flown. West v. West was still in the law-courts. It was now the plea of Oliver West that Philip was the child of Dolly Field, and as her child had been apprenticed; and that the late Philip West of Westhorpe and West Hall was the actual father, thus accounting for natural resemblance. It was urged that Dolly was a flippant, bold young woman when Francis Field married her; that he was known to be jealous of his wife, and to be vindictive against Squire West; that he and his wife had many quarrels, and finally separated on account of the boy; and that the story of his being stolen had been trumped up to excite compassion and cover her own shortcomings when the lad's features excited inquiry. If true, why did she not come forward with her testimony?

The plea was plausible, the difficulty to prove a negative great. Oliver West and his friends drank and feasted, hiccoughed and hurrahed. in their confidence of success.

Peter Webb's twenty thousand pounds were gradually melting in the legal crucible, but

Madam West said loftily she would surrender her last guinea in defence of her son's right, and neither Cordelia nor he should sacrifice a shilling until her own funds were exhausted.

The law-clouds hung low and ominous. Even Mr. Bulwell shook his head and looked grave. A ray of wintry sunshine flitting through the court-room of the Birmingham Old Cross came to disperse them.

The doom of the Old Cross was sealed. It was destined to come down before the year was out. Only a day or two remained for it, when amongst the numerous causes brought before the commissioners was that of a poor woman to recover from a man named Thomas Green, a needle-book containing a few shillings, which she had lost and he had found. Refusing to restore it he had cursed her abusively, and claimed it as his own.

William Hutton, the untiring, was upon the bench as president, in the best of health and spirits.

As the woman came before him to make her plaint he regarded her attentively, wondering if the poorly-dressed old creature, with care-lined face and thin white hair, could ever have been known to him in his young days. But the broad Nottinghamshire tongue and the name she gave, "Dorothy Field," set doubt at rest.

She seemed to have no remembrance of the portly gentleman of sixty or more with the broad high forehead and shrewd face, who sat there to give judgment, and he was the only one of the four commissioners who could have told that she was younger, not older, than himself.

The defendant, equally recognizable from his foul tongue and misshapen limbs, stared at the judge with wide open eyes, as if unable to believe the evidence of his senses. "It's luck! It's aw' luck!" he was heard muttering to himself, as he scowled upon Dolly, whilst she made her complaint.

Then he asseverated boldly that the lost property was his. "I fairly fun' it, an' I reckon ivrythin a mon finds is his own."

"And so you apprehend the street gives a title to whatever lies upon it?" said the judge steadily. "You forget that property cannot change its owner without an act of that owner. You can inherit no title but from her, and she has given you none. If you accidentally find a person's title-deeds, will it give you a right to the estate? Should a man take up your watch, would you think he had a right to keep it? Or rather, would you not hold forth in a different style, and proclaim that power right which obliged him to restore it? It may be generous to reward the finder,

but he can demand nothing. We shall allow you what you do not deserve—one shilling, make an order upon you for the rest, and leave you to reflect how you stand with the world, and how you might have stood. You may farther reflect that your honesty can never be called into question, for of this you have publicly made shipwreck; your capacity may, for as every loser of a cause pays the fees, you have for twelve paltry pence bartered away seventeen and a character."

As if to prove how little of the latter he had to lose Tommy Green flung the empty needle-book across the court in the woman's face, and swore with a tremendous oath he would neither return her money nor pay fees if he went to the Dungeon for it.

"Findin's keepin', losin's seekin', a' th' warld o'er," he vociferated, as the beadle advanced to remove him; "an' if yo hadna th' devil's luck and yo'r own too, yo'd noan be sittin' theere to praich to better folk nor yor'sen."

As an attendant constable hauled off Tommy Green to the New Dungeon in Moor Street, the beadle was observed to whisper to Dolly, who thereupon took a seat against the wall and waited patiently. She had been promised to have her loss made up to her in case the defendant did not himself repent at the Dungeon gate.

In about an hour William Hutton left the bench to his brother commissioners, and retired.

Up came the constable, and civilly bade Mrs. Field follow him.

As she went down the stairs of the Old Cross, and down the stone step where she and Phil had sat half-famished, she looked out on the blank space where the old Gateway had once blocked the road, and wondered what had become of William Hutton. Of Phil's restoration to his mother she already knew.

In a couple of minutes she was shown into the parlour of the Garland House, to find William Hutton and the judge who had tried her one and the same.

There was cold beef and ale upon the table, and she was invited to partake. But in less than half-an-hour she and William Hutton were speeding away in one of the new hackney coaches down the paved and cleared Bull Ring, and after a brief stoppage in Edgbaston Street at the works of Cotterwell & Co. for inquiry, away along the Edgbaston road, as fast as the horses could carry them, out of Warwickshire into Worcestershire to the fine stone mansion of Carew Mount.

Explanations had been given on the road.

Never was an arrival more welcome or opportune.

Mrs. Field's indignation at the aspersion of her good name made her doubly willing to serve the people her husband and Peg Harris had between them so basely and cruelly wronged.

At the final trial, which took place the following month in Westminster Hall, William Hutton and others had been cited to appear, but her presence as a witness to vindicate her own character and explain all that had been misrepresented was an unexpected blow to Philip's opponents. Neither judge nor jury saw anything bold or forward in the respectable sad-looking woman before them, who gave evidence against her bad husband so reluctantly, laying on Peg Harris the onus of the child's abduction. And when it was further proved by other testimony that the said Peg Harris had been transported to Virginia for maliciously and revengefully compassing the death of Philip's father, animus was proven, and it needed but the evidence of Philip's own injured hand to settle the matter conclusively in his favour.

Oliver West, who had spent the previous night in a carouse with his friends, gnashed his teeth and vowed he would appeal to the House of Lords. But that was an idle threat. The suit of West v. West was to all intents and purposes at an end. There was only the

reckoning and the vacation of Westhorpe to follow.

Yet it never came into Philip's possession after all. Legal costs and dissipation had swallowed up the estate like quicksands.

And Oliver West, who contrived to drink himself to death in less than six months, also contrived to keep afloat the idea that Philip was not the true heir.

Cordelia could only congratulate Madam West and her adored husband on retaining West Hall indisputably. "We are rich enough, my love," she said to him, "and surely two homes may suffice for us and ours. But we must make a home for the poor tempest-tossed creature who has done us so signal a service."

"Aye, aye, my Cordelia, she must never leave us. Here she is safe from the clutches of her vile husband. He dare not approach to claim or persecute her lest he put his own neck in a noose."

So she was told. And with them she was thankful to remain, a respectful and respected dependent, as much at rest as memory would permit. She heard nothing of her husband and concluded he was dead. And she never regretted the loss of her needle-book, little wotting any connection between the tenacious finder and the man to whom she was legally

tied for life, or any evil consequences to follow.

As little thought William Hutton of an evil to overtake him as he walked morning by morning from Bennett's Hill to his High Street shop, and seated himself on a pile of paper as on a throne, chatting to customers and friends. As little thought he as he left his business to the care of Thomas his son and Thomas his brother—still his assistant, not his partner—of any misfortune to befall that business. As little thought he as he built a coach-house and set up a chariot for his wife, or traversed the country from spa to seashore of the envy following the track of his wheels.

As little thought he as he sat at his old desk writing book after book, now a guide, now a history, now a record of the "Court of Requests," now the long contemplated "History of Derby," and whilst they were publishing and selling, jotted down the memorials of his own life—as little thought he of the day when that desk would be ransacked and his papers scattered to the four winds.

The death of his sister, Catherine Perkins (who left a nice little property behind her), and the prolonged illness of his wife, were sorrows in the natural order of things; but while he was in the zenith of his popularity,

and his heart was elate with a consciousness of all he had achieved by his own hand, swift scathing calamity came upon him, and the self-made man was in the dust.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE HANDS OF THE MOB.

"A LITTLE leaven leaveneth the whole lump," a spark to a powder magazine will wreck a town. The French Revolution had set all Europe in a ferment, until in England "Freedom" and "Loyalty" became party watchwords to inflame the worst passions of men. Comprehensive understanding is not necessary to make a zealous partizan. All that is needful is some self-interested bias, or determined opposition, and then the dogged obstinacy of the man who will not allow himself to be beaten either in argument or action asserts itself, and he will blindly fight tooth and nail for that of which he really knows little and cares less. No more fruitful causes of discord have arisen in the world's history than religion and politics. No matter how dissolute a man's life, if he adopts a creed even in name only, he will wage battle against all other creeds to maintain his own. No matter how lawless or criminal he may be, he

will shout himself hoarse to proclaim his loyalty to the monarch he pleases to patronize. Republicanism and atheism were in 1791 rampant on the other side of the Channel, and in their terror lest the contagion should spread to their own land, well-meaning Englishmen created scarecrows out of very harmless materials. Freedom of opinion was not tolerated, and dissent had a hard time of it.

On the early evening of July the 14th, 1741, William Hutton limped into Birmingham a poor homeless wanderer.

On the 14th of July, 1791, just fifty years to the day and hour, a devastating storm broke over the town and drove him forth again homeless, shelterless, friendless.

The tradesman had been too prosperous, the commissioner of local acts had been too strenuous in the abolition of nuisances and encroachments, the judge too impartial in the administration of justice. His enemies were of all classes, yet he blindly thought himself without a foe.

On the 14th of July—a fateful month for him—a party calling themselves "The Friends of Freedom" celebrated the anniversary of the downfall of the Bastille by a dinner at an hotel in Temple Row. The preliminary announcement was certainly startling. It

was headed "Commemoration of the French Revolution."

This was followed by a counter offer to supply "an authentic list" of the diners, evidently intended to alarm the inhabitants and put a stopper on the dinner.

A seditious handbill was circulated privately. This was followed by a reply headed, "An Incendiary Refuted;" by an offered "reward of a hundred pounds" to discover the writer of the seditious handbill; and by a printed manifesto from the commemorationists emphatically disclaiming all knowledge of the inflammatory handbills, and averring their "firm attachment to the Constitution of their own country."

Nevertheless, the eighty-one gentlemen who sat down to the dinner at three o'clock were hissed and hustled as they passed into the hotel by a violent crowd of people assembled before it.

At six o'clock, William Russell, the president, and his eighty *confrères* left the hotel under the impression that the remnant of the crowd would disperse also.

Disperse! Those who had retired came back with reinforcements, noisy, reckless, riotous.

Vain was the assurance that not one of the dinner party remained in the hotel. In vain

the magistrates came on the scene and strove for order; the hotel-keeper had provided the dinner, and as a protest the vociferating mob demolished every accessible window in the building.

Some one must have suggested that those who had met to dine were chiefly Dissenters. A cry arose, "To the New Meeting!" and there was a tumultuous rush of roughs armed with stones and staves, and iron bars, bent on destruction. Gates and doors were burst open, windows and woodwork smashed, and then the handsome pile where Dr. Priestly had ministered was given up with all its valuable library to fire and flame.

Another party of the rioters had simultaneously attacked the old Meeting House, broken up and torn down pulpit, pews, galleries, and burnt the woodwork in the burial ground over the graves of the dead. Then the demons kindled a fire within; there was a shrieking of terrified women and children in the dwellings round about, a rush for buckets and fire-engines (such as they were), but not a drop of water went to quench the flaming pile: it was spent on the endangered homes around. And many a frightened mother thanked God that it was a calm, still night, and the sacrificial flames rose straight to heaven, and left them scatheless.

The rallying cry was "Church and King!" but here and there a noisy brute shouted "No Popery!" "Down with the Pope!" too ignorant or too reckless to discriminate between presbyterianism and popery. Their creed was plunder and destruction, their God was Baal!

It was clear the lawless outbreak had been planned and organized, the leaders whoever they were—and there were well-dressed men amongst the mob—having counted on the magnetic attraction of an excited crowd, the common tendency to follow the multitude to do evil.

Only a concerted plan could have sent detachments of the insurgents from both Meeting-houses, to join issue on Fair Hill, a mile from Birmingham, and united make a still more savage onslaught on the fine residence of Dr. Priestly himself, raving like madmen when they found the learned and scientific preacher had escaped their merciless clutches.

What harm had Dr. Priestly done to them? He had not even been present at the obnoxious dinner! The friends who came to warn him of his danger found him amongst his apparatus in his laboratory engaged in some experiment for the benefit of mankind. They induced him to flee, aided him to escape, and

promised to pack and remove his valuable books and papers.

No use! no use! Friends were driven back and foes swarmed everywhere, armed with crowbars, picks, and bludgeons; swearing smashing, tearing, pitching out of broken windows pictures, books, furniture, into one great blazing pyre; making an effigy with the Doctor's own wig and gown, and burning it with the rest. The trees and pallisades provided fresh weapons, the cellars provided wine and spirits to make the madmen madder, and set them fighting among themselves whilst the flames leapt and crackled within and without, till cornice and pediment melting in the heat, fell and crushed one of the busiest, unheeded by his fellows.

The dead man had called Peg Harris (or Green) sister.

Morning broke on another mass of ruins, and on drunken savages wallowing in liquor, or lying asleep in the fields and ditches, and along the high road in helpless intoxication.

William Hutton, ever an early riser, awoke that morning in his comfortable chamber at Bennett's Hill, with not an anxiety in the world but the lamentable state of his wife's health. But ere he could reach the breakfast table daintily laid out with plate and china, aromatic coffee in a silver-pot, and savory edibles

to tempt the palate, he was met at the foot of the stairs by white-faced Patience, then old and feeble, wringing her hands and crying, "Oh, master! the rioters! the rioters!"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, sir! All Birmingham's in the hands of a hooting mob. They've burned both Meeting Houses and Dr. Priestly's and are going to break open the Dungeon and the Prison; and oh, what shall we do if they come here?"

"Tush, woman! Some one has magnified a mountain out of a molehill. There was no riot when I left business yesterday."

"Ah, father, but you came home earlier than usual," put in Catherine. "When I gave mother her medicine at bedtime I noticed how red the sky looked over the town."

There was no loitering over breakfast after that. But convinced the alarm was false, and that a late sunset had reddened the sky, he took his three mile walk into the town as usual. And yet not as usual, for as groups of colliers with blue cockades, hurried past him on the road, all armed with picks and crowbars, and gesticulating wildly, he quickened his pace, only to receive melancholy confirmation as he went. People with faces full of terror were chalking on doors and shutters "Church and King," as if to seek pro-

tection from the cabalistic words. And he saw branching off right and left, not one mob but two or three.

He found his warehouse thronged with affrighted inhabitants seeking advice. It was given with his customary clearness. He had no personal apprehension.

"Apply to the magistrates, and request four things: to swear in as many constables as are willing, and arm them; to apply to the commanding officer of the recruiting parties for his assistance; to apply to Lord Beauchamp to call out the militia; and to write to the Secretary of War for a military force."

Whether the magistrates were at once applied to, or whether they were divided in their counsels, they were slow to act. They voted for *pacific measures*. A nobleman harangued two divisions of the excited mob and *requested* them to desist. Placards were printed addressed to people who could not read, or had not sense to reason if they could; or reasoning, laughed at the timidity of magistrates who begged them to disperse *because* they had *done enough*.

It was to them an official sanction of brute force, an admission that wanton outrage and plunder were permissible in a degree; and they took their own estimate of that "enough."

Mrs. Baskerville had been laid to rest in St. Philip's sacred ground for years, and John Ryland, the husband of her daughter, was the owner and denizen of the mansion at Easy Hill, a man whose goodness and public usefulness deserved a better testimonial than the treatment he received.

About noon Philip West came spurring down cleansed and well-paved New Street, no longer a market for swine. At the High Street paper warehouse he flung himself from his horse.

"Mr. Hutton," he cried, "I come to warn you. At least a thousand ruffians have surrounded Baskerville House. They are trampling down the flower beds and crashing in the doors and windows. And I hear your own house is condemned."

"Mine, mine? I was not at the dinner. I am no man's enemy, and I do not suppose I have an enemy in the world."

"Neither was Mr. Ryland at the dinner, but he was, like yourself, a public man, and public men have always enemies."

"Ah," said the other bitterly, "so they have. Benefactor rhymes with detractor, and if John Ryland is assailed, I dare not hope to escape."

"I have been to the magistrates once this morning," cried Philip in exasperation. "I

might as well have argued with a set of old women. If they do not heed me when I go now I will myself denounce them to the Government as traitors."

He flung himself across his horse again, and was riding off.

At that moment a dense cloud rose into the summer sky, followed by a shaft of lurid flame, beyond the long vista of New Street.

"There? I told you so!" exclaimed Philip. "It is enough to make John Baskerville turn in his grave."

"Aye, if they leave him a grave to turn in," was the answer, as William Hutton hastened to consult with his brother and son.

Presently Jack Cotterwell came darting in. Out of breath he blurted out, "Quick, Mr. Hutton, remove your property as fast as possible, the rioters threaten to destroy it."

"Fifty waggons could not carry away my stock and furniture; how can I remove it?"

Yet at that very moment Thomas and a workman were staggering off with the pile of paper known as "William Hutton's throne."

"Take measures to protect your property," shouted a neighbour in alarm. "The rioters are coming."

"Protect my property! It is the duty of the magistrates and of every townsman to

protect," was the prompt answer. "Will you take charge of a portion?"

"I *dare* not!" avowed the white-lipped man. And scarce a neighbour dared to lift a finger or open a door to save the goods condemned.

"At last the magistrates are wakening to their duty," cried Philip, on racing back. "An express has been despatched to Government, but the whole town may be in flames ere the messenger reaches London. They are swearing in special constables now! Thank God, my mother is at West Hall. I wish my wife and boys were with her, for no man's home is safe. I am told by the magistrates that if I arm my servants I shall be held responsible. But I shall do it, and woe betide the first rioter who comes within gun shot of Carew Mount."

Hutton's shutters were closed, the doors bolted and barred, Philip had called this out to his old master at an open window above, whilst a portion of the "true blue" mob with all the exultation of victory came roaring and tearing down New Street, heedless of their fellows left drunk and mad to scorch and frizzle in the blazing ruins behind them.

"Keep your breath to cool your porritch, *Squire!*" bawled a mocking voice from the roadway. "We'n settle scores wi yo' when we'n fettled th' larned judge here! Luk to

yor eawn whoam, an dunno yo brag so leawd. We'n shew whose honds fortin's in neaw, an be dommed to yo!"

"Aye, mon, we'n settle scores wi' th' Wests now, an a' the crew as uphold 'em!"

Philip, already on the move, hearing a battering on Mr. Hutton's door and shutters, turned his head, and beheld the bleared, bow-legged tailor arm-in-arm with a one-eyed amazon, whose grizzled elf-locks hung in a wild tangle on her shoulders, and whose hideous hare-lip yawned as she shouted after him with a stronger garniture of blasphemy than could be repeated here. Armed with knotted sticks the pair clung to each other reeling, powerless for aught save evil.

Where had Philip seen that woman's face before?

As he put spurs to his horse, stirred by their threats with new fears for his wife and boys, as these personal enmities developed, he puzzled where he had seen that woman's repulsive face before.

Edgbaston Street was left far behind before across his mind like a flash came the cruel remembrance of Peg Harris, though the old hag must have lost an eye since he saw her last among the Derbyshire hills.

What had the Wests done to her or hers that he should be pursued with such fiendish

malignity? became the unsolvable problem as he urged his horse to its full speed, bent on measures for the safety of other property besides his own.

He had left Mr. Hutton at an open window prepared to address the advancing mob, to whom no magistrate as yet had read the Riot Act. He expostulated. They demanded money. He gave them every penny of coin he had about him. Then the cry was for liquor, and he was hauled off by grimy hands on his collar to the nearest tavern to pass his word for ale *ad libitum*.

Apparently satisfied, one of their leaders, a man wearing the "true blue" badge, was left as sentinel to pass his comrades on, and shouting, "For Church and King! To Bordesley Hall!" the seething mass moved off to join a larger body in wrecking the noble mansion of John Taylor, the banker and japanner.

Under the influence of a private solatium, and liquor gratis, the man left in charge of the paper warehouse repeated his assurance that no harm should be done there, and seeing various "true blues" sent to the right about, William Hutton took heart, and went home to comfort his uneasy wife and daughter with the assurance that all was safe, leaving Thomas and Tom in charge.

The lull was but temporary. There came another onslaught, another effort to force in the doors secured by Philip's locks and bolts. Again there was a buying off with cash and liquors; the cash borrowed.

Ere night set in a flame shot up from Bordesley Hall irradiating the sky and supplying the lamplighter's neglect in the town below.

Then up the Bull Ring came a tearing rabble-rout, men and women intoxicated as much with fury as with wine, a mob that had defied constables at Bordesley and repudiated a hundred pounds with shouts of "No bribery!" There was no buying off these men. Indeed there was a seeming gentleman in their midst recognized by Thomas as *Roper*, bribing them with guineas to "Pull down Hutton's house," on a plea as false as the man. He had waited nearly fifty years for his revenge, and here it was.

The "true blue" sentinel asleep on his post, rose to his feet with a shout, "True Blue! Church and King! Down with the Presbyterians!"

"Down with the upstart judge, who sends poor folk to jail for a shilling or two!" cried one who seemed to be their leader, a tall, powerful ruffian, wielding an iron crowbar in a hand as black with soot as was his smutty face and coal-black hair. "Ha, when my

home was wrecked by rioters, he preached a sermon on work, and said he meant to work himself up the ladder of fortune! We are the rioters now. We'll show him, my brave fellows, whose hands his fortune's in, won't we, Peg! He bade me repair the damage done by rioters. We'll give him damages to repair, now," as he plied his crowbar on the yielding door with no prentice-hand.

"Aye! ler *him* larn te wark now! We'll pee off old grudges te-neet! He baulked me ower t' lad, he'll none baulk us te-neet," shouted the gaunt hag by his side with more than one oath, as she flourished a fire-brand, and her spouse Tommy Green struck at the shutters with a knotted stick with a force that sent the splinters flying.

"Neay, we'n fettle him. He'll noan send me t' th' dungeon fur five shillings again. He'll noan preach that a mon's fortin's in his eawn hond in a hurry. It's in eawrs neaw. Luck's torned neaw, owd woman!"

"Aye, us'll pay him for torning us out o' work at his d——d mill at a minute's warning, us will!" shouted others, every old grudge seemingly raked up as an excuse for demoniac revenge, or insatiate greed.

Meanwhile the swaying multitude tore up the new pavement and sent the stones flying and crashing through the upper windows,

driving the inmates to flight. Others bellowing, were thundering with iron and steel on wood and bricks; Francis Field had his helpers, bolt and lock might hold, but wood gave way at last, and in rushed the mob to pillage, batter and destroy. Paper, books, furniture, mirrors, were pitched through the shattered windows, curtains of yellow damask or green moreen were torn down to fill with plunder, women and men vieing in thievery. The fluted posts of mahogany bedsteads, already taken down for removal, were used as bludgeons. The old desk was broken open, its stand broken to match-wood. The good old press was hacked to bits. Larder and cellars were invaded, wine and spirits were free, and the demon of destruction ran riot for eleven hours. The very beadle of the Court wore the blue cockade, and carried off all he could lay his hands upon. The town crier mounted to the roof, rung his bell, and sung out,

"I'm Shuker the crier; when I come down this house will be on fire!"

And on fire it would have been but for Thomas Hutton and Jack Cotterwell, who, armed with a smith's hammer, kept watch and trampled out the fire Peg Harris lighted time after time, until the neighbouring populace were roused to interfere in their own interests.

"Down with the Court of Conscience!" shouted she in exultation.

"Pull down if you will," cried they, "but fire spreads. No fire!"

"No more ale scores to be paid," cried the besotted tailor, mutilating a carved mantelpiece.

"You'll be hanged as the rioters were in 1780," interposed Jack Cotterwell.

"We'll hang him! He made me pay fifteen shillings in the Court of Conscience, d——n him!"

But amongst it all none was so fierce or furious as Field, ripping up flooring, breaking balustrades, crashing through all that was breakable, a very demon of destruction.

And so the riot went on until the morning. But not until midnight, when William Hutton watched with pain from his own bright home the flames rising from Bordesley Hall, did he learn from his son what havoc had been wrought in High Street, or that the very hearth he stood upon was threatened.

Half distracted, he gave orders for the chariot to be horsed; his sick wife was hurried from her bed, hastily dressed, and with Catherine and the reluctant owner driven off to seek a place of safety in an inn, at Sutton Coldfield, whence they were afterwards driven by the landlord's timorous fears.

By four in the morning, the same riotous mob trod his self-planted garden into a dreary waste. The well-stocked cellars were broken open, and men wallowed in wine and ale. Above, from storey to storey the savages went raving at the luxuries they found, and the same work of pillage and wanton destruction went on unchecked by magistrate, servant, friend or neighbour.

The intoxicated Fury of the Torch lighted it up at length with none to say her nay; the main building first, and then the wings. The coach-house stood apart. "What!" said she, "is not that down. We'll none do our wark by haulves!"

And into the coach-house she staggered with a burning brand. It flared up, as the house had done, but Peg Harris never came out alive! Too drunk to stand, she must have fallen, for there her charred remains were found, and recognized by William Hutton when he came in his desolation to see what devilry had spared.

Other bands of marauders were pillaging and burning elsewhere, good Churchmen suffering equally with Dissenters, even a parsonage house was plundered, and still the hollow cry was "Church and King," and still the frightened magistrates held aloof.

But ere Saturday wore itself out the rioters

crossed the boundary into Worcestershire. *There* Philip was on the alert on the first alarm to have a warrant signed by ready justices, and no sooner was an attack made on Moseley Hall than off he went on his fleetest steed to the garrison in Nottingham for troops.

The high-spirited woman he had taken to wife had urged him to this; urgently combating his desire to remain and protect her and his home.

"My love," said she, "your presence might only bring on us all the ruin and disaster you dread. It is against you alone that horrid woman Peg, and Dolly's husband would wreak their malice. Our servants are staunch, the boys and I are all good shots. Have no fears for us. The mob seeks plunder not lives. But if those two wretches found you here nothing could save *your* dear, dear life. You would do us better service by bringing soldiers to our aid. And there is no trustworthy and influential messenger to be found. As you love me—go!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN OTHER HANDS.

Half round Birmingham the fires were alight. Poor as well as rich began to suffer.

Gentlemen armed their servants, and they threw down their arms on the mob's approach, too timid to resist.

Their first check was on the Sunday evening at Carew Mount, defended by a brave woman and her two sons.

A contingent of the rioters with Field and drunken Green at their head marched shouting and bellowing through the gate and up the avenue, to find the house closely shuttered. At an open window above the door stood a majestic matron, pistol in hand, her sons behind her, and a pale woman in the rear.

"My God! That is Francis!" burst in a note of anguish from the lips of the latter.

Cordelia West took up the cue.

"Francis Field," said she, "if you are the leader, I warn you. I am armed and my servants are well armed. Every door and shutter is fastened with tested locks and bolts,

and behind them are men prepared to meet you. The first man that advances another yard I fire upon, and I shall not miss."

There was a general shrinking back. The bold front of the resolute woman awed them. Hitherto they had met with bribes and timorous requests to spare. The opposition of a woman had not been contemplated, and firearms were not familiar to the masses. Only the gentry were allowed to carry them. The little tailor, too inebriated to think or care for danger, alone thrust himself forward swearing loudly, "Who cares for a woman? come on."

There was a sudden flash, a report, and Tommy Green was rolling over and over on the gravel shrieking.

"Will you stand this?" cried Field to his followers, who hung back, and was himself rushing forward, when a second pistol was in the lady's hand levelled against him at full cock.

He knew well what a pistol shot could do by painful experience. He had evidence before him that hers was a sure hand. He was no coward, but he shrank.

At that moment a woman stood beside Mrs. West. He staggered and stood aghast.

"Stand back, Francis Field," she called to him. "Dunnot add another crime to your

sinful soul. Stand back, and dunnot raise a finger agen th' good family as han gien home an' shelter to me."

"Dolly!" he exclaimed. "Dolly! You *here!* With *them*, *them?* *Not with Hutton!* I'll have Joe Roper's heart out! He is a knave and a liar!"

There was no Peg at his side to urge him forward with fiendish fury. He turned on his heel grinding his teeth together and shaking his clenched fist with deadly meaning. There was small need for him to call out, "Turn back, turn back! We don't war with women!" His followers were already on the move. The pistol shot and their fallen comrade had sent the foremost back on the rear, and they scampered off like sheep. Tommy Green staggered to his feet, amazed to find himself unhurt. Yet he had been surely hit by—a pistol *wad.*

A resolute woman, a pistol, a pinch of gunpowder, and a paper wad had scared the crew and saved Carew Mount!

Field's scare was a deadlier shot than pistol or bullet. He had murder in his heart when he followed his tribe not alone to join the band then plundering Dr. Withering, the botanist, at Edgbaston Hall. He sought Joe Roper only. Joe Roper had done his work and was out of reach already.

As they neared the hall there was an alarm —"The Light Horse! The Light Horse!"

With no further warning the troops were upon them, blazing fires on the horizon and Philip West serving as guides.

The ringleaders, including Field and Green, were captured, not without a struggle, but the great mob, that in four days had wrought more devastation than a hostile army, as William Hutton quaintly expressed it "mouldered away."

The riots were at an end.

The consequences remained.

After driving from place to place in a hired chaise to find a haven for his wretched wife and daughter, he himself compelled to hide and skulk behind hedges, almost afraid to beg a draught of water at a cottage door, William Hutton, on the night of Sunday the 17th, found himself leaning for support against a milestone at Sutton without money, food, home—or hope.

"What a reverse of situation!" he ruminated. "How thin the barriers between wealth and poverty! On Friday morning I was a rich man; in the evening I was ruined. What had I done to merit this calamity? Why did I not stay at home, oppose the villains at my own door and sell my life at the dearest rate? This might be counted rash, but under

unmerited distress like mine a man must either sink or become desperate."

He had become desperate, but William Hutton had no fighting courage, no resistance; prosperity made him bold, misfortune bent him down; his strength was in endurance only. His calamity was too recent and overwhelming for even that.

A man approached him in the gloom. "Sir, is not your name Hutton?"

"Yes."

"I have good news; the Light Horse have entered Birmingham."

"How do you know?"

"I saw them."

"That is good news indeed. It will put a stop to plunder."

It did more; it restored confidence.

At the "Castle" Inn, Tamworth, his invalid wife and his daughter had procured shelter on the credit of his friend Bage the paper maker. A banker named Finch volunteered a supply of cash.

On Monday morning he stood among the *débris* of his property in High Street, in a windowless, roofless ruin, with scarcely a vestige of furniture or woodwork intact. Amongst a huge mass of paper, wood, coal, piled up on the ground floor for a bonfire, he discovered the old oak desk, with a broken

lock and hinge; but not a sign or token of the cherished MSS. or other valuables it had held.

King Charles's Golden Rules were still pasted inside the lid, and he shook his head with a sigh as he reflected that if Peter Webb's papers had not come to light when they did they would have shared the same fate; the fate that had fallen on his son's valuable library and book-cases, on plate and linen, wearing apparel, household goods and relics.

Relieved of an incubus the inhabitants testified their joy in illuminations.

And then came the reckoning. Men of means were not to have their houses burned down with impunity; and however party feeling might create delays, some sort of compensation had to be made in time, though the compensation rarely represented the loss. But long before that time came William Hutton was at work rebuilding. He was not altogether destitute, his land-buying had preserved him an income to fall back upon.

Friends, the more fortunate Wests among the number, offered the use of their houses until his own could be restored; the beadle of the Court showed him how, under pretence of pillage, he had stowed a chamber full of his goods; but until order could be reduced out of chaos, William Hutton and his son slept in

a house without doors, windows, or roof, or clothes to change.

There was another reckoning to be made, and that was with the rioters. They were removed to Warwick for safe custody and trial. Government prosecuted, but William Hutton, and not he alone, grew savage over the palpable miscarriage of justice consequent on the obtuseness or party bias of the Birmingham jury.

Three only of the ringleaders were sent to the gallows—Francis Field, Tommy Green, and a man named Cook; the two former condemned less for their share in the riots than for other lawless acts and violent deeds long left unpunished. They were represented as "infernals let loose among men."

Yet infernal as they were one woman's breast held some drops of pity for the worst of them. Dolly Field, who had suffered so much in mind and body from the brutality of her husband, in her fervent Wesleyanism forgot everything but her early love, and her Christian duty to care for his soul.

His dark utterance in front of Carew Mount had led to the conclusion that some palliation might be found even for Francis Field. He was evidently the tool of others. He had turned away from destructiveness at her bidding and could not be wholly beyond influence.

Her friends obtained for her admission to the prison. And day by day she might be seen entering its dark portals to minister alike to the temporal and spiritual needs of the man who had blotted out joy from her life.

At first he repulsed her fiercely, but she was no longer the sharp-tongued Dolly he had known, and the wholesome food she substituted for his prison diet opened the avenues of his heart before the day of trial. She could not well read to him, but she could exhort him, and pray for him with the unstudied gifts of piety, although there was no privacy for their interviews.

She exhorted him, and in this she was perhaps not wholly disinterested, to clear his soul in a confession. The day after the execution the gaol chaplain handed to her a paper written and signed in a clerkly hand. Amongst much that is irrelevant it cleared up more than one mystery.

He blamed his father's harshness, and the wicked prompting of his uncle Harris, for his life's misdeeds. They had led him on from bad to worse ; to pilfer from his father, forge his name, until the good man cursed the hour he had taught him to use a pen. Justice West was a terror to evil-doers ; the Harrises hated him bitterly. And when old Harris was hanged, and Ben transported, Peg took

an oath to be revenged on the Justice who had condemned them to jail. Wrapped in a man's cloak she had hung about West Hall to steal away the son and heir. Once the child ran in affrighted, and hurt his hand in his haste to shut her out. The second time the lad, playing in the grounds, pitched his ball outside the gate, followed to regain his plaything, was snatched up, the cloak thrown over him, his mouth stopped and before he was missed his cap lay beside the Beck, his fine clothes were stuffed into a hollow of the Haywood Oak, and only a dirty beggar's brat lay sleeping soundly in the strong arms bearing him away. She swore she would bring him to the gallows where her father had swung. And had not Dolly carried him off it might have been.

He and Peg had then turned footpads, living how and where they could. It was then she lost her eye with a cut from an old quaker's whip, and his arm was disabled by a pistol shot from Squire West who had come to the quaker's rescue.

They were still disabled and in want when Peg came across Dolly comfortably seated behind a shop counter, with "Hutton" over the door. Peg jogged his jealous memory that Hutton had been Dolly's sweetheart, that Hutton had found them out in Charnwood,

and suggested that she had fled to him. They too were marked, there was no safe following to Birmingham. When they did, there sure enough was found West's son, but no trace of Dolly. Still, there was the suspicion that William Hutton kept her somewhere hidden from his own wife's knowledge ; and the suspicion festered. He had now a personal grudge against Squire West and William Hutton both. He had never forgiven the latter his lecture on laziness in Charnwood. He confessed how he had drained and tempted Philip as a first step to his ruin, and how when he strove to rob Hutton's shop he had fled, not from fear, but stung by the immaculate honesty of the lad no less than his appeal to him as a father. On Peg's transportation he tried hard for a better life. She and Ben had hunted him up on their return. He was then working honestly at the Soho mint. They again led him astray. He took to coining. Then Joe Roper crossed his path, and set him mad with a tale that William Hutton kept Dolly at Swithland, and had removed her when found out.

Bad as he was he had loved his wife, and the raid on Hutton's place was half the outcome of his jealous frenzy.

When he beheld her in comfort at Carew Mount he felt how his jealousy had been

played upon. His conscience again smote him, and he saw the wide gulf between them, saw the wrong he had done to good people through taking their fortunes into his black hand.

But Dolly had convinced him there was another and stronger hand guiding and ruling men's lives and fortunes; exalting the humble, bringing pride unto the dust, shaping men's evil into good, and even through prison doors bringing penitence and hope. He should go to the gallows penitent and remorseful.

This confession was a boon to the Wests. Their old opponent Oliver had contrived to keep scandal afloat. The finding of the mouldering velvet frock and underlinen, stuffed out of sight in the old oak near the source of Dover Beck set gossip and doubt at rest for ever. The confession and the clothes were kept together as family relics, with the two old knives.

William Hutton read it, and bit his under lip, and when a few years later he saw his old enemy Roper in the streets of Bromsgrove, a ragged, broken-down wretch who had flung fortune away and begged for pence, he remembered this confession only to obey the injunction, "If thine enemy thirst, give him drink, if he hunger, give him food." Another Hand than his had avenged him.

Certainly he never again was heard to boast of a man's fortune being in his own hand ; no, though he survived his good wife very many years, travelled hither and thither, lived at ease, wrote volume after volume on the old desk, again set up, and died in honour in his own mansion, worth forty thousand pounds, exclusive of the business, which had for years been surrendered to his son.

THE END.

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